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BY

J. I. BELL, M.A.
FORMERLY LECTURER IN HISTORY AT GOLDSMITHS' COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
LATE LECTURER IN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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From the Louterell Psalter.

"A faire felde ful of folke fonde & there bytwene
Of alle maner of men, the mene and the riche,
Worthing and wandring, as the worlde asketh."

The Vision of Piers Plowman.

FOURTH EDITION

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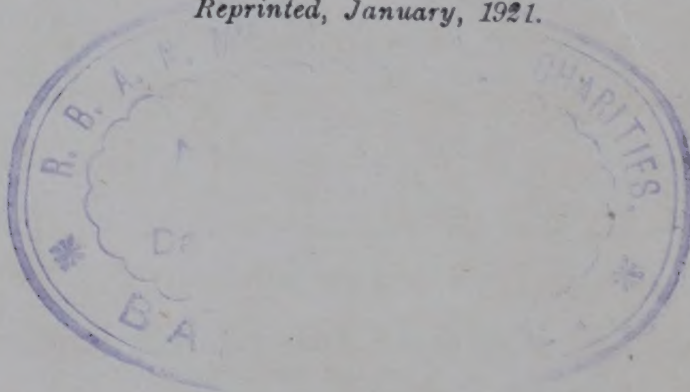
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PREFACE

A POET who lived more than five hundred years ago, at the end of the fourteenth century, tells how on a May morning he wandered forth into the Malvern hills. Wrapped in a rough shepherd's cloak, he lay down and fell asleep. He dreamed that he saw eastwards, towards sunrise, a tower, and Truth was therein; westwards he saw a deep dale, wherein dwelt Death and wicked spirits; and between these there lay a Fair Field full of folk, of all manner of men, the mean and the rich, working and wandering as in this world men must.

There were ploughmen toiling on the land, men buying and selling, hermits living alone in cells, lawyers, priests, palmers, and idle folk. Amongst them he saw the king himself. But of all those whom he saw in his dream, Peter, the honest Ploughman—whom he called Piers Plowman—was the chief.

It was a vision of the life of his time; and when he awoke he wrote the great poem called "The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman." This poem has given the title to these history books; which tell, as it does, of all manner of men who have worked and wandered in this world.

E. H. S.

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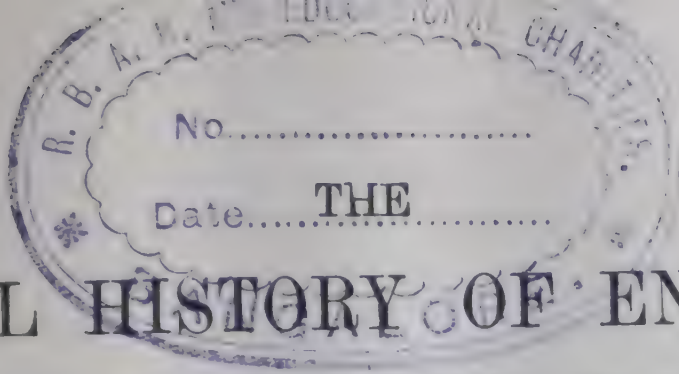
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SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO 1485

CHAPTER I. OLD STONE MEN

THOUSANDS and thousands of years ago this land that is now called England was not separated from the continent of Europe by an English Channel and a North Sea. Where fishes now swim and herring boats float, there were in this far-off time rolling plains and thick forests. Sometimes, for long periods, the climate was warmer than ours; at other times it was much colder. In the cold periods



FIG. 1.—Our Islands joined to the Continent in the time of Old Stone Man.

the snows of winter time did not melt on the mountains of Wales, Cumberland and Yorkshire, but lay white and

thick for centuries, and formed rivers of ice, called glaciers, that slowly flowed into the valleys below. Amidst snow and ice, few animals could find a living, but in the lower, warmer lands there were huge numbers of them dwelling and fighting together. Some were very dreadful monsters that are now extinct, or are only seen in Zoos and foreign lands, but others were timid, peaceful

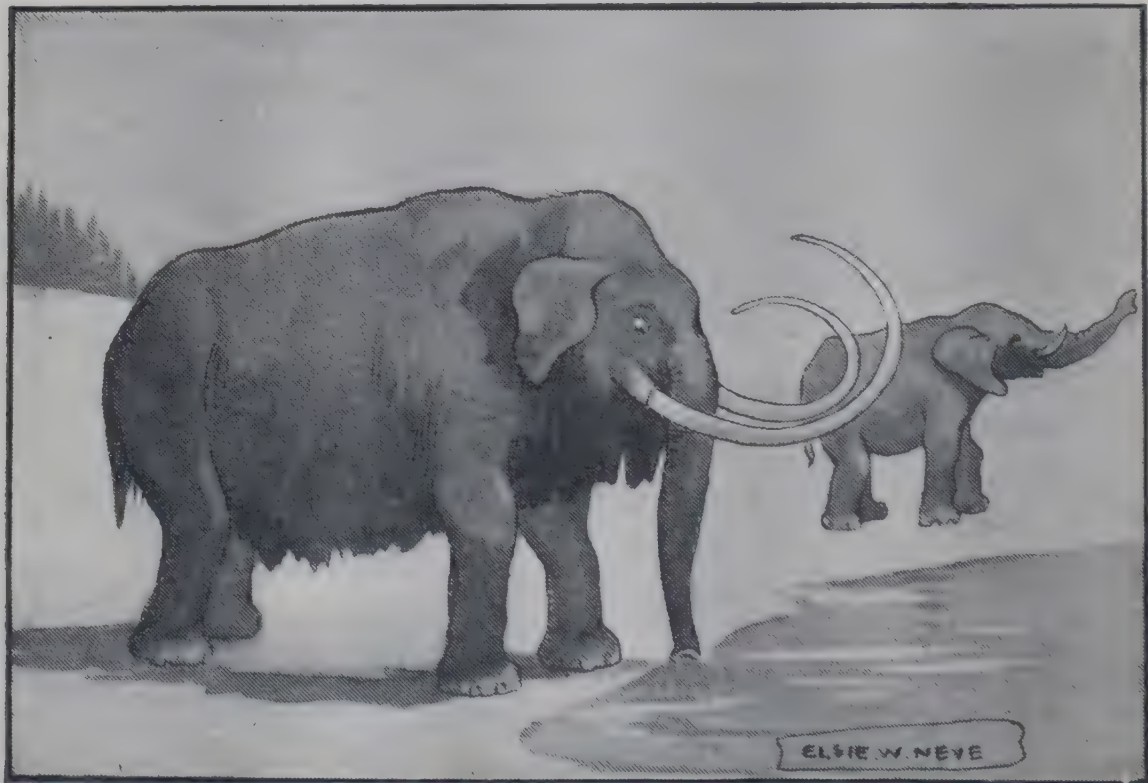


FIG. 2.—Mammoth and Elephant.

things. The biggest of them all was the mammoth, a monster shaped something like an elephant, but standing sixteen feet high and having tusks sometimes twenty-three feet long. To protect it from the cold it had a thick coat of fur and hair, and underneath its skin a layer of fat. There were elephants too, and rhinoceroses, lions, bears, hyænas, hippopotamuses, and tigers with long teeth. Among the peaceful kind that are good for man

to eat were antelopes, reindeer, fallow deer, bison, hares and many others.

Slowly wandering across Europe there came a succession of very brave and strong races of men and women. They lived mostly on meat, and were great and skilful hunters who made it their business to go where they could find many animals to hunt. No one knows when they first



FIG. 3.—Sabre-toothed Tiger.

came into this country. Indeed, we know very little about them, for none of them could write or cut sentences on stones, which men to-day might dig up and read, as they dig up and read inscriptions at Nineveh. Nor were there any educated men of other races, who could visit these people and write an account of them for later ages to read. At the time when the men and women we are reading about came to our country, there was no man in

the world who could read or write. Something, however, has been learnt about their appearance and ways of living, for some of their bones and many of their weapons have been found. Sometimes a cave is discovered in which these people once made a home, and by digging into the floor of it we find the axes and knives and



FIG. 4.—Reindeer.

needles that they made, and the bones of the animals that they killed and devoured, and occasionally the bones of the men themselves.

The men and women of one of these early races were very unlike us to look at. If one of them were suddenly to meet us, we might think an animal had escaped from a Zoo. The man was shorter than the average man of

to-day ; his height was about five feet four inches. His head was very large, but shaped very differently from ours ; his forehead did not rise above his eyes as our foreheads do, but receded something like a chimpanzee's. His jaws were very large, and enormously strong, and projected very far forward ; if you look at present-day people, you will see that their jaws scarcely project at all. His eyes were very large, perhaps to enable him to see in the dark caves and woods in which he lived and hunted, and over them hung very bushy eyebrows. His nostrils were wide so that, when chasing animals for food or running away from dangerous ones, he might have plenty of air to fill his lungs. These, too, were large, and the chest which enclosed them was broad and deep. His legs were short and curved, but of great strength as a hunter's should be ; and because they were curved he probably walked with a rolling gait.

But the other races of this far-distant time were not so



FIG. 5.—Bone Needles.

curious in appearance. If we were to meet them nowadays dressed in modern clothes we should not think them different from ourselves. For clothing all these early races must have used the skins of wild animals ; the bone needles with which they stitched them together are found among the rubbish of their homes.

To-day a hunter carries at least a rifle to kill his game and a steel knife to cut it up with. But man of these very distant times knew nothing of any metals. In his hand as he marched along you might have seen a spear not tipped with metal but with a sharp piece of flint or bone. Thrust in his belt would be a flint axe fitted to a wooden

handle, and beside it a kind of dagger made from a chip or flake of flint. One end of the dagger would be wrapt round with grass to form a handle. As we come near a smithy to-day we hear the ring of the smith's iron hammer on the iron anvil; but if we had come near a work-place where flint weapons were made, we should have heard

the tap, tap, tap, of a flint hammer coming down upon another piece of flint. The flint worker in that far off time settled at places like Dartford in Kent, where there are many flint stones to be found.



FIG. 6.—Stone Axe (one-third actual size).

Let us pretend that we have heard the tapping, and have quietly crawled up to the top of a mound, and can

look down on him at his work. He is seated on the ground, turning over in his hand some large pieces of flint, and wondering which is the best one to make into an axe. Beside him are some finished axes and some long flakes, which will serve as knives. On all sides are little chips of flint, which have been struck off in manufacture. He and perhaps his grandfather and father must have been working here for many years. Hush! you must not move or whisper, for, although he looks absorbed in his work, he is listening eagerly for any noises, that may tell of danger; and his hearing is very sharp. If the wind were blowing from us to him, he might even smell us. Happily it is blowing the other way. Ah! he has chosen a good piece to work on,

and steadies it with one hand on a large stone in front of him. With the other he picks up another stone to use as a hammer, and there! we hear the tapping sound as he rapidly trims the selected stone into the shape of an axe. He seems very skilful at his work. He stops: he has heard something: keep your heads down. He sees men; they have come to barter for weapons. We had better be off, for they look dangerous.

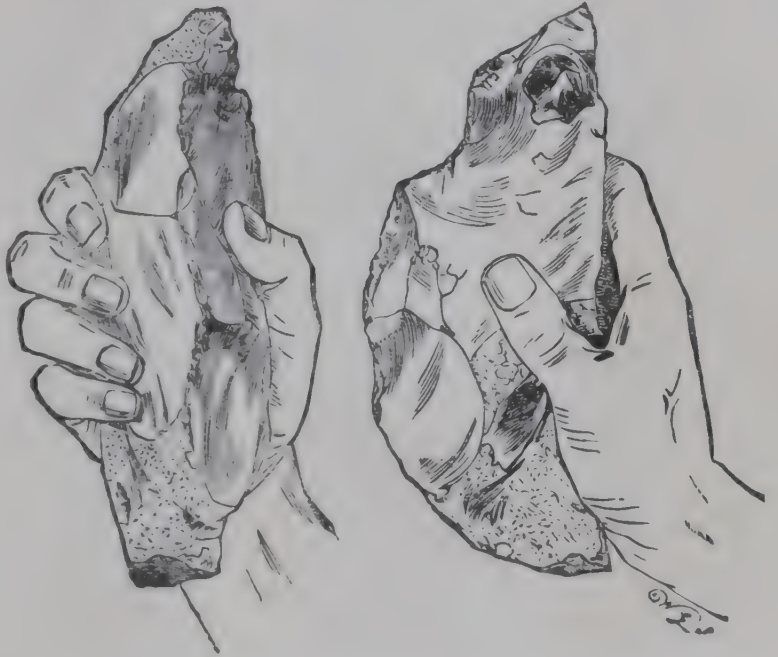


FIG. 7.—Tool for chipping Flakes off Flints.

Let us go and have a look at his wife in her home under the cliff by the river's edge. We can see her sitting on the ground doing something. Why! she is stitching. I saw her right hand go up in just the proper way. She is tacking skins together (no one could say she was really sewing) and using a bone needle and a piece of gut. She made the needle by scraping down a piece of bone with a flint scraper till the proper thickness was attained, and then she bored a hole in the thicker end with a flint gimlet. You can imagine that her stitches are not very



FIG. 8.—Flint for scraping Needles.

fine. I can see her two youngsters pretending to be enemies, and stalking one another among the bushes. Hallo! I can see her going away and taking her boys with her. Let us run to the cave and look round.

What an awful place to live in! Its walls are quite damp; and how dirty it is, and how it smells! The



FIG. 9.—Gimlets.

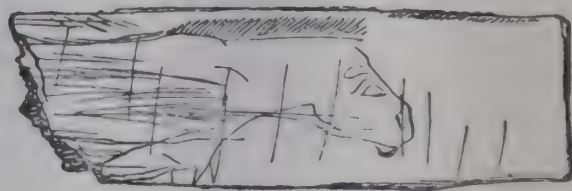


FIG. 10.—Horse's Head on Bone.

woman never seems to clean it up. I can see the remains of many meals, and pieces of old meat lying everywhere. The whole floor on which we stand is made of ashes of fires and bones of deer and oxen and hares and broken flints and charred wood and stale fish. The skins with which they cover themselves at night, smell horribly. There is a huge lump of meat lying on the dirty floor; it is to be broiled on the fire and eaten at the next meal.



FIG. 11.—Barbed Spear Head made of Reindeer Horn.

Meanwhile it is covered with flies. That and some berries are all the food we can see. There is no furniture,

no table, no chairs, no bed, no plates, no pots nor pans. All the bones lying about are broken because these people love marrow. Why! Here's a picture of an animal's head carved on a piece of bone. What a surprise to find that these savages can draw! There are also axes and knives, and bone needles, and bone harpoons for spearing fish, lying in the corner. They are the most valuable things in the place. But let us get into the fresh air for it is not nice in here.

* * * * *

Some day we ought to go to the Museum and look at the axes and knives of flint and needles and fishing spears of bone. The flint weapons, although quite sharp, have not got smooth sides or regular edges. Any boy who has watched masons rub a slab of stone with a smaller piece, or has sharpened a slate pencil on a window sill, knows that a very smooth surface can be obtained. But the races of men we are reading about never learned this, and so their axes are never polished. For this reason they are called Old Stone Men to distinguish them from another and later race, who knew how to polish, and are called New Stone Men. How Old Stone Men dared to come to this country when awful animals like the mammoth and rhinoceros and lion lived here, we can never understand. No doubt they kept out of the animals' way as much as they could.

To-day, our food supply is very varied. We grow many kinds of crops; we keep domesticated animals like sheep for mutton and wool, and cows for beef and milk and butter and cheese. But Old Stone Men lived by hunting, and fed also on the berries and roots which grew in

the woods. He could not tame animals, nor grow crops, nor spin wool into thread, nor weave thread into cloth. So he and his friends went hunting and fishing nearly every day. Sometimes they followed the great herds of bison and reindeer, watching all day till a weak or tired one dropped behind, or lay down to rest. Then they surrounded it and killed it. If it broke through the ring and endeavoured to rejoin the herd, they had no dogs to head it off, nor horses to carry them in the pursuit. They had to pursue it themselves on foot. Sometimes they lay deep in the grass waiting for an antelope to come near enough to be killed.

Unpleasant surprises often happened to them. As a man quickly pursued his prey, perhaps he disturbed some ferocious beast and in his turn became the victim. No doubt he knew what it was to fly before the charge of an angry trumpeting elephant, pursuing with uplifted trunk. The blowing of a hippopotamus startled him as he floated down stream in his canoe, intent on spearing fish. The roaring of the lions in the Mendip Hills disturbed his dreams, if he lived there ; if his home was on the banks of a river, rising waters sometimes woke him in the night in time to save his children, but not to save his property. The night was full of terrors for him. Strange eyes of wild animals glared at him through the darkness. Quaking with dread he turned home to the fire that kept all wild animals away. But the most cunning of his foes followed him even there ; for the sake of a valuable axe one man might slay another ; or man might quarrel with man for food in times of scarcity. And perhaps when old age crept on and a man could no longer hunt for himself, but

clamoured for a share in the supplies won by the hard toil of others, his fellow men turned on him and slew him because they could not spare the food to keep him alive.

CHAPTER II. NEW STONE MEN

No one knows what happened at last to the Old Stone Men. They disappeared; perhaps they all died; perhaps they went away to other countries. Many of the animals of their time disappeared too. Mammoths and elephants no longer browsed on tree tops; lions no longer roared in the Mendips; no hippopotamuses splashed in Thames. The whole land sank slowly into the ocean. Gradually the salt water of the Atlantic crept up the valley where once a great river had flowed, and formed the English Channel. From the north, the sea entered the great valley where once the mingled waters of Rhine and Thames had flowed north; and at last the land sank low enough to let the rushing waters meet where now are the Straits of Dover. The climate changed. The rivers of ice melted; in their place were valleys and woods and rivers. Where snow-fields had stretched for thousands of years were now bare mountain tops. More rain fell then than now; in many places for miles and miles there was nothing but fen where herons waded, and swans and other birds paddled about for food. In other parts, huge forests darkened the ground, and made a home for fierce grizzly bears and wolves, as well as for gentler animals. But then, as now, there were dry open spaces on the downs of Surrey and Sussex, on

Salisbury Plain and the Yorkshire Wolds and many other places, and there there lived another race whom we call New Stone Men.

Had you met a New Stone Man, you would not have thought him so ugly as some of the Old Stone Men. His appearance was very like what ours would be if we went about with no clothes but a few skins. His height was about five feet six inches; his forehead rose above his eyes like ours; his nose was not like Old Stone Man's, neither did his jaws project like his. Indeed, he was rather pleasant and gentle to look at, and perhaps not so strong as Old Stone Man.

He knew a great deal more. He still used stone weapons, but was cleverer in making them. He knew how to grind his axes smooth, and sometimes he polished



FIG. 12.—Stone Axe in Original Handle.

them till they shone. He could chip flints into beautiful arrow-heads and knives and spear-points and chisels. So clever was his work that ignorant people who find his arrow-heads to-day, think they were made by fairies, and call them "Fairy Bolts." They put them in silver settings and wear them as charms and ornaments. New Stone Man learnt that flint dug out of the earth was easier to chip into the proper shapes than flint which had

long lain on the surface of the ground. And so he dug deep flint mines and tunnelled out long galleries something like our coal mines to-day. And in places we can still



FIG. 13.—Flint Knife and Spear Points.

walk along these tunnels and still see the picks made out of deer horn lying where their owners put them down for



FIG. 14.—Fairy Bolts.

the last time; we can still wonder at the little chalk lamps they used to lighten the darkness of the mine.

Much of the knowledge that we find very useful to-day was first discovered by New Stone Man, and so we should

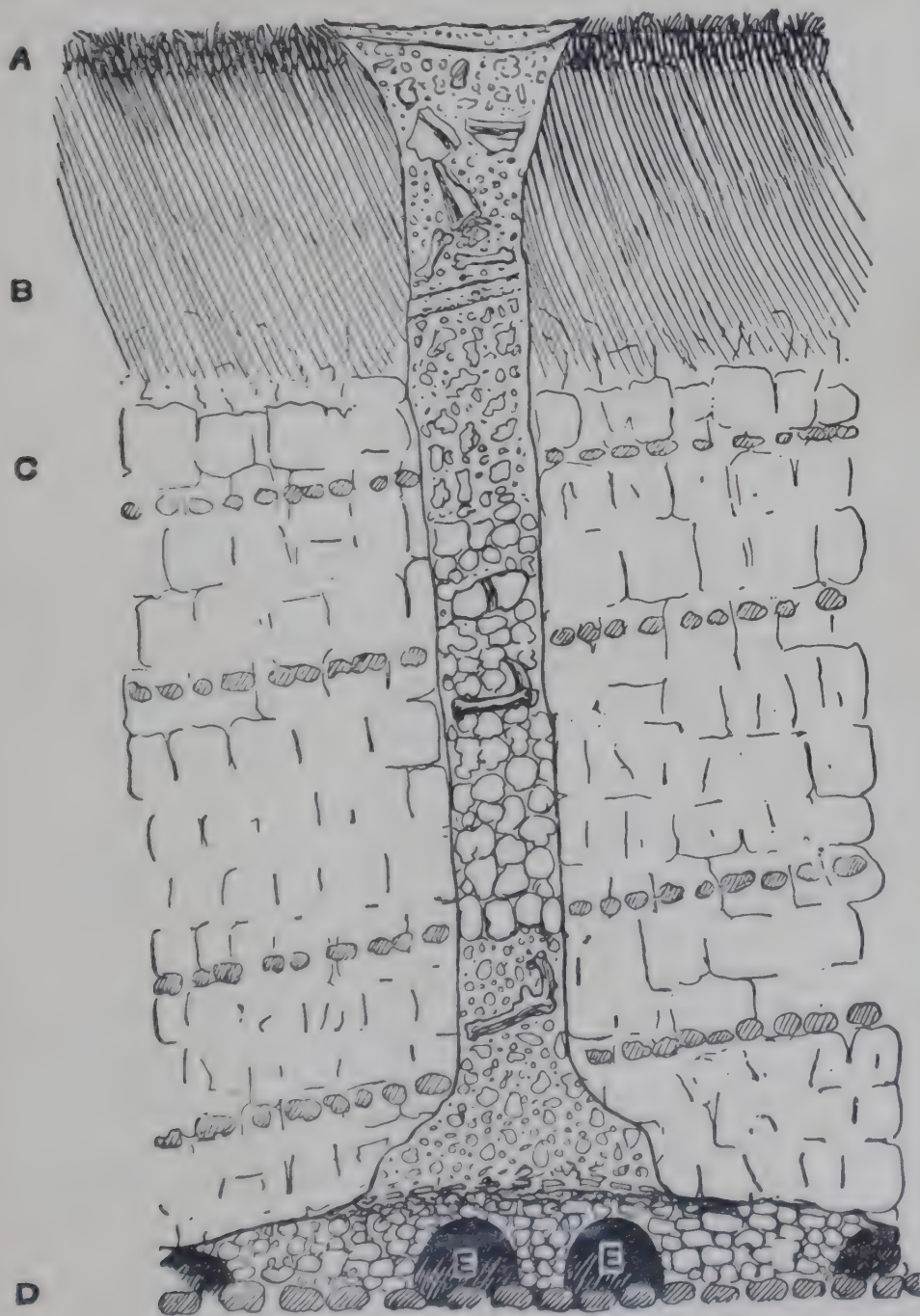


FIG. 15.—A Hole dug down to a Bed of Flints by New Stone Man.

This hole has been filled up with rubbish, such as bones, earth, stones, and pieces of chalk.

A is grass.

B is soil.

C is chalk.

D is a bed of flints. There are four other beds of flints higher up. But they were too narrow to trouble about. D is a thick bed, so the miners made tunnels which are marked E.

be very thankful to him. He was the first man in this country who knew how to tame animals ; he was the



FIG. 16.—Pick made of Deer-horn.

first to make friends with dogs, and to keep sheep, goats, cows, and pigs. And so he was better off than Old Stone Man, who lived by hunting, and starved when he could find nothing to hunt.

New Stone Man could hunt too, but, when game was scarce, he had beef, mutton and pork, and milk, and butter.

Old Stone Man was often idle when he had killed enough animals to last a while. But New Stone Man

was always busy. When the cows went out to pasture, herdsmen went with them to protect them from the great wolves ; shepherds watched the sheep and kept off wild beasts at night by lighting fires and making great noises ; perhaps they found out how to make musical pipes



FIG. 17.—Chalk Lamp.

from reeds, and played tunes on summer days. But at any moment pipes might have to be flung aside, when bears came near the flock. So New Stone Man had to chip flints, and hunt like Old Stone Man, and do many other things besides.

But there were some things he did not find out. New Stone Man in Britain never knew how to grow corn, and make it into flour and bread. He could not spin the wool of his sheep into thread, nor weave thread into cloth.

Next time you walk over some dry, open ground that has never been ploughed, you may find yourself walking round, or dropping into, little circular pits about three or four feet deep, and twelve or fourteen feet across. These were once the homes of New Stone families. They were deeper then, and had a bank of earth thrown round them to prevent water flowing into them. From the centre rose a pole to hold up a roof of thatch or branches of trees. If you dig into the centre of the pits, you may find even to-day the remains of fires, that once were used for cooking, and round which the family and the dogs slept at night. And bones may be turned up—all that is left of many a huge meal. Where you find many pits like these, there was once a village. From a distance it must have looked like a collection of large shaggy beehives. And close by you may perhaps find the pond, which the inhabitants excavated to hold the rain-water and the dew with which they watered their cattle. Perhaps, to this day, it has water in it ; perhaps you will only find the place where once it was. And round the village, and perhaps round the pond too, you may find a trace still of the earthen wall and ditch, which the inhabitants made to protect them and their wealth from their enemies.

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Suppose you come up to such a village at sunset. Yonder are the hunters coming home with their fish or

deer or other game. The barking of dogs draws your eyes to the cows being driven home to the milking. Chattering round the village gates are the women and girls with milking pails of wood and leather. Some boys are watering horses at the pond, and shouting with fun as they have bare-backed races on the way home. From somewhere inside the village wall you can hear the tap, tap, tap, of some flintsmith putting the last touches to the day's work. Up comes his son, the miner, with a bag of flint stones. He is white with dust, not black, for he labours in chalk mines, not coal pits. Out from the gates there come the herdsmen, who are to watch by the sheep and goats all night. Soon, far off on the downs, you will see the glare of the fires they will light to scare away the wild beasts. The smell of roasting meat reaches your nose, for the hunters have quickly skinned and cut up their spoil with their long flint knives. They have saved the hides, for the women and girls know how to scrape all the flesh off them, and make them soft and warm to sleep on. Soon, when all have had enough to eat and drink, thick sheep skin rugs will be spread on the ground; drowsiness will fall on the village with the darkness, and soon there will be no one awake save the watcher and his dogs. All around will be silence, broken only by snores from the huts.

CHAPTER III. THE MEN WHO USED BRONZE

It is now more than 1900 years since the birth of Christ. About 1900 years before His birth, a dreadful race of warriors began to sail to Britain from the continent. They gradually beat many of the New Stone Men out of their homes, and took their lands and their cattle. They were three or more inches taller than the older inhabitants, and the skeletons, which wise men have to-day dug out of tombs and examined, prove that they were very strong and cruel-looking. Indeed, they were as strong as Old Stone Man, but were taller than him. It was only to their enemies that they were cruel, for we can tell that they were kind to their wives and babies. Some of the toys and little ornaments which they made for their boys and girls have been found.

They were the cleverest men that had yet come to Britain, for they knew how to use metals like gold and bronze. They knew nothing about iron, which we find so useful to-day. Iron is much more difficult to make use of than gold or bronze. So men learned the easy things first, and then many hundreds of years later were able to learn the more difficult things about iron. The man who used bronze was able to make knives out of it, and daggers, spear-heads, axes, razors, pins, tweezers, chisels, buckets, and shields. He decorated some of

them very beautifully with lines and studs of gold. The smiths who lived in those times must have been very clever men.



FIG. 18.—Bronze Dagger.



FIG. 19.—Bronze Spear Head.



FIG. 20.—Bronze Axe.

Bronze is a mixture of copper and tin. Pure copper is too soft to make a good knife or dagger, but when mixed with tin it becomes hard and tough. It does not become as hard and tough as iron or steel, as you will see if you try to sharpen the edge of a penny and cut something with it. It was a fortunate thing for the men who used bronze that copper and tin are usually found

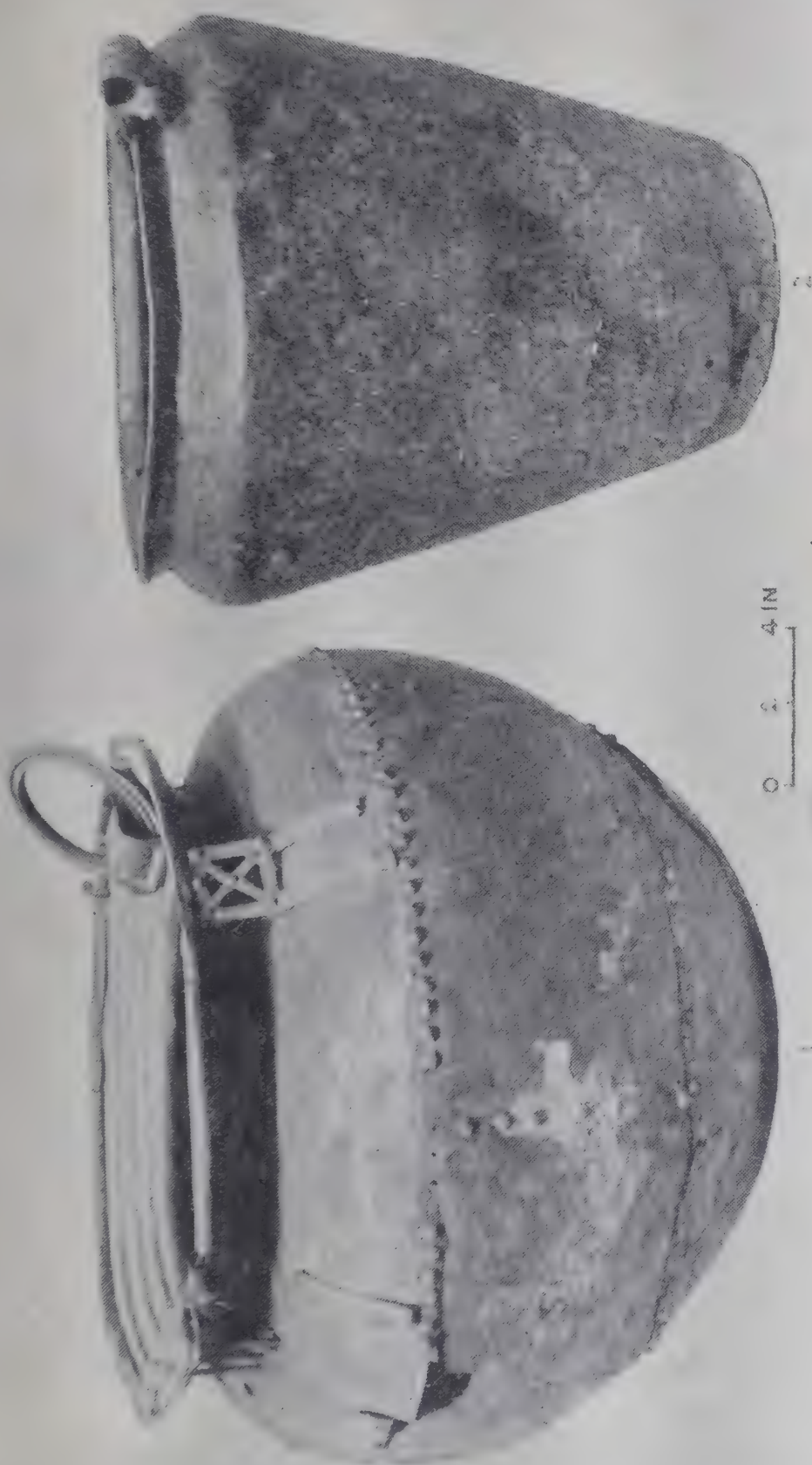


FIG. 21.—Bronze Buckets.

in the earth already mixed together. No one knows how they first discovered that bronze could be made into weapons. Perhaps they thought the man who first showed them the way to make metal weapons a very great magician, and paid him great honour. Somehow or other they learned much about casting melted metals into shapes by pouring it when it was red-hot into moulds. And they learned also how to heat it in a fire, and hammer it on an anvil as a blacksmith to-day hammers hot iron.

But they did not at first give up the use of flint axes and knives and arrow-heads, for bronze was very dear and rare. And so we find plenty of stone weapons lying in the homes of the men who used bronze.

Copper, of course, is found in this island, but scarcely any gold. Nearly all the gold which was used by men of Britain in the bronze-using age for making pins, bracelets, and trinkets, came from Ireland. In those days, a great deal of gold was sent from Ireland to all the countries in western Europe, and to Britain also.

Bronze-using man brought another very useful piece of knowledge with him when he came to Britain. He had discovered how to spin wool and flax into thread, and how to weave the thread into cloth and make clothes of it. This was a very great discovery indeed. Some small bits of the woollen and linen cloth he made have been found, although he made them 3000 or 4000 years ago. With his bronze dagger, his bronze shield brightly polished till it shone red, with his gold bracelets, collars and studs, and with his woollen and linen clothes, bronze-using man must have looked very smart. Sometimes,

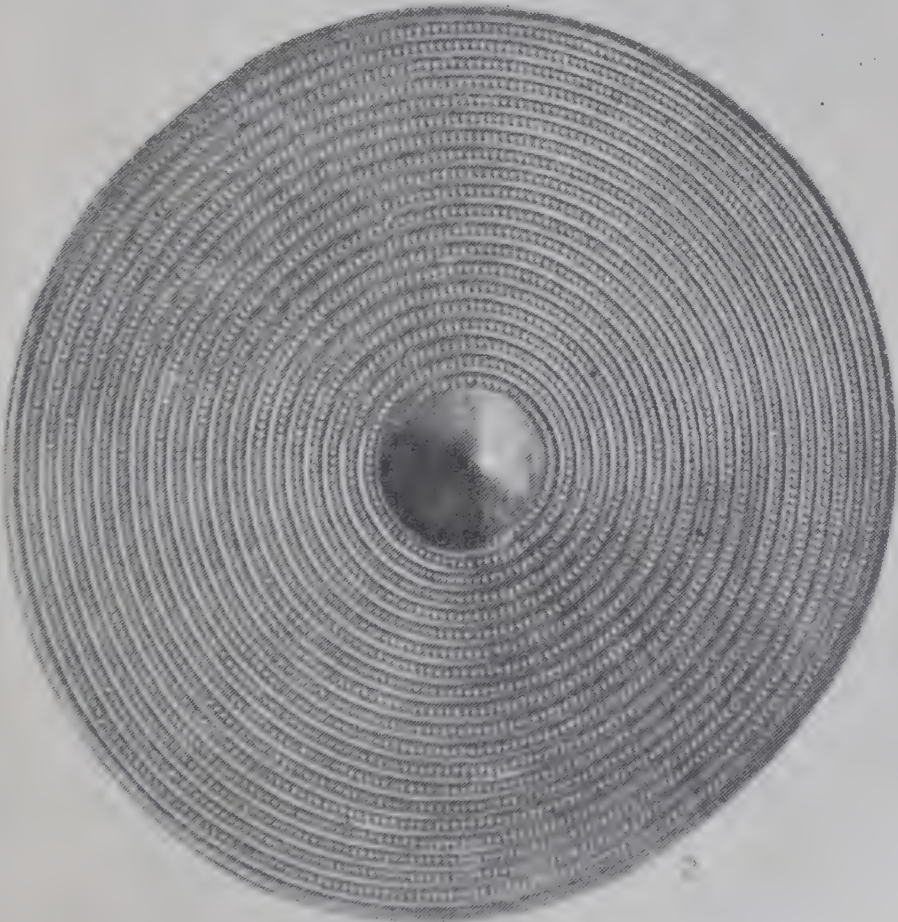


FIG. 22.—Bronze Shield.

to give a finishing touch to his splendid appearance, he



FIG. 23.—Gold Bracelet.

wore a necklace of beads made of jet or glass or amber. The amber beads, when he used them, were smooth, clear and almost transparent. But now, owing to age, they have lost their transparency and smoothness. He gave his wife clothes and ornaments as fine as his own.

This very clever man had made still another very fine discovery. He knew how to sow and reap wheat, and make it into flour and then into bread. We sometimes find the mill stones which he used to grind the wheat into flour. His method of grinding was very simple. He or his wife put a handful of corn on to a flat stone, and rubbed it with another stone, till it was ground to powder. We can scarcely call it flour, for it



FIG. 24.—Gold Collar (half actual size).

must have been dirty and rough to look at, and not fine and white like ours. Mixed up with it were pieces of grit from the grinding stones. When we find the skull of a bronze-using man, we see that his teeth are worn down to the level of his gums. People say that it was the grit in his bread that did this.

Sowing and reaping corn, looking after flocks and herds, and making cheese and butter must have kept



FIG. 25.—Jet Necklace.

Bronze Man very busy. He had more to eat than the two other kinds of men that came before him. And he hunted less than they did. When men to-day dig into the rubbish heaps which he has left behind him, they find that most of the animals he ate were tame ones, and were not wild ones that he had hunted down and killed. They can tell that from the shapes of the bones which are found among the rubbish. Because he had more food, we can be certain that he did not go hungry

as often as Old Stone Man, and New Stone Man. And because he had cloth to wear as well as skins, we are sure he did not feel the cold so much.

Most Bronze Men lived like New Stone Men, in caves, under trees and in holes in the ground. But they were so clever in other things that it does not surprise us to learn that they could build houses of stone. Men not long ago noticed in various places in England little mounds. They dug into these with spades, and found inside them the ruined walls of houses. They said that Bronze Men made these houses, for bronze tools were found still lying about in them. Some were used to live in. There the diggers found the old fire places, and the flat stones on which the old owners of the huts had cooked their bread. They found also the stone mills on which corn was ground into flour. They found even the broken shells of the periwinkles that Bronze Men had eaten so long ago. Others of the huts were workshops, where bronze was melted by fire and cast into the proper shape. A mould for giving the melted metal the shape of an axe was found in one of the workshops.

Bronze Men were very religious. Temples that they built 3000 years ago or more are still standing in many parts of England and Scotland, to remind us that they believed in God. They are not made with walls and roofs like our churches, but are merely circles of great stones set on end in the earth. The greatest of them is Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. Many of the great stones of this temple fell down centuries ago, but none are allowed to fall now. Enough are still standing to tell us what the temple was like when it was new. No one really knows what Bronze Men thought about God, but

we can be certain that processions filled the temple to give thanks to God, and offer up sacrifices to Him, when crops were good and men were prosperous; and that, when men were killed in war, or when disease carried off many, the survivors went to the temple to call to God for help.

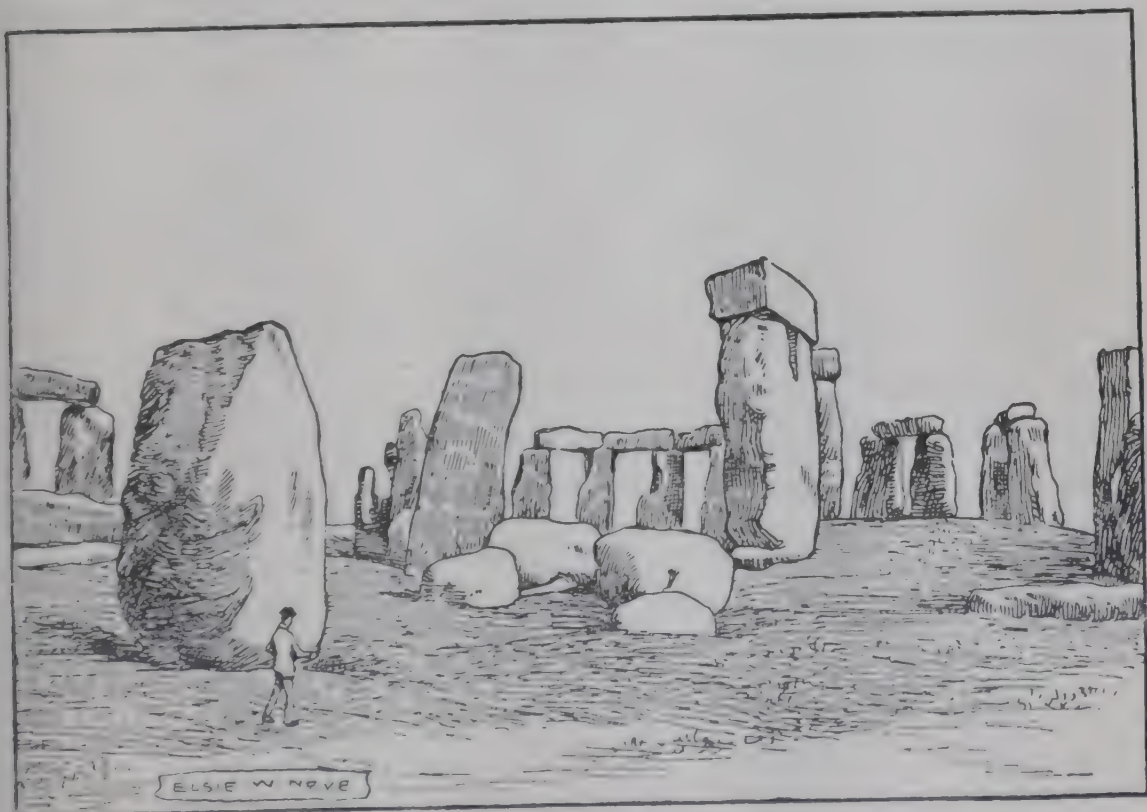


FIG. 26.—Stonehenge.

People to-day like to be buried in a churchyard. Bronze Men liked to be buried near Stonehenge. So that part of Salisbury Plain is like a huge cemetery. If you stand near the stones, you can see many round hillocks dotting the ground. Under these lie the remains of chieftains. By digging we can learn something of the funeral ceremonies. The dead man was laid upon the ground. Round him gathered his friends and relations, to hold, for the last time, a feast in his company. Beside

him they laid offerings of food and drink in pots, which still remain for explorers to dig out. Sometimes they put his dagger in his hand. Sometimes his wife was slain and laid beside him, so that her spirit might keep his company in the next world. Then, when the feast was over, men toiled for days to raise a mound of earth above the dead man that the place of his burial might never be forgotten.

CHAPTER IV. THE MEN WHO USED IRON

IRON makes much stronger swords and knives than bronze. It was first used in this country by a race called the Britons, who came from Gaul, or the country which we now call France. With their iron weapons the Britons conquered a great part of the country, and gave it the name "Britain," by which it is still called to-day. They began to cross the sea from Gaul about 400 years before the birth of Christ.

Old writers have told us what these men were like to look at, and we can be sure that their description is correct, for men exactly like them are still living among us to-day. Some of them were tall, strong people with long red or sandy hair. A famous general, called Julius Cæsar, who tried to conquer them and wrote an account



FIG. 27.—A Briton.

of his attempt, tells us that the men shaved their beards, but grew long moustaches. Other writers tell us that their bodies were covered by a kind of shirt which we



FIG. 28.—Iron Sword.



FIG. 29.—Bronze Shield.

call a tunic, over which they threw a cloak fastened by a brooch like a safety pin on the right shoulder, so that the right arm was free. To cover their legs some wore breeches and others perhaps wore kilts, like the Scottish

Highlanders of to-day. Probably all these clothes were made out of brightly-coloured cloth like the Highland tartan.

The Briton was a clever worker, and able to make things out of iron, bronze, tin, clay, wood, coral and enamel.

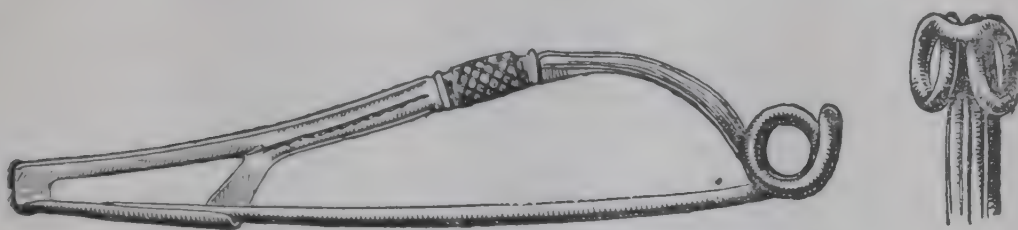


FIG. 30.—Bronze Brooch.

And whatever he made, whether it was a mirror, sword, scabbard, shield, brooch, bracelet or piece of pottery, he decorated it with such beautifully drawn lines and shapes



FIG. 31.—Patterns on British Pottery.

that artists to-day are very glad to copy them. Boys and girls in schools sometimes use lines and shapes like these as models for freehand-drawing. Even the things which a Briton had in every-day use in his home, such

as wooden buckets, cups of earthenware and tankards of bronze, were decorated in a way which shows that they knew very well what was beautiful to look at. Even the harness of their horses was well made and adorned with red enamel. So when any one tells you that the ancient Britons were very rough, ignorant savages, do not believe him.

They showed how civilised they were in other ways. It is thought that some among them could read and

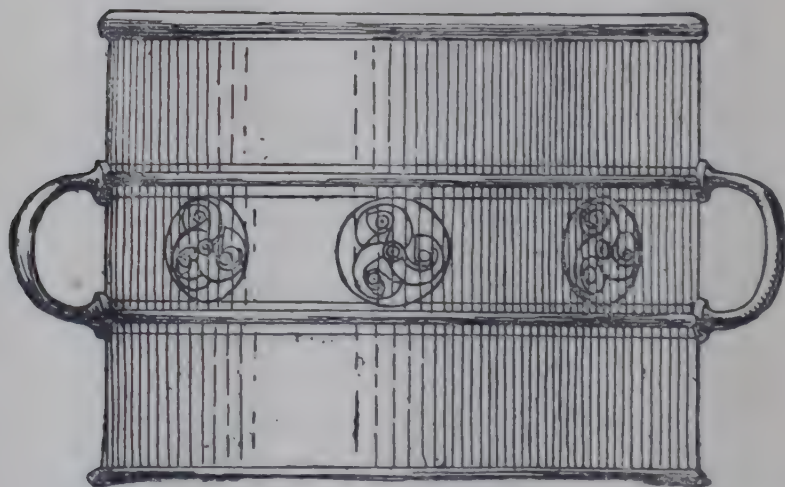


FIG. 32.—Bronze Mounted Tankard (one third actual size).

write. They were the first men in this country to coin money out of gold and silver. That shows that they bought and sold a great deal. In the days before men used money, buying and selling were very difficult. If a man wanted a plough and was willing to give a horse for it, he had to look for a man who had a plough for sale and was willing to take a horse in exchange. It might take a long time to find such a man. There might be plenty of men who wanted to buy a horse, but had no plough to give in exchange. And there might be plenty of men

who had ploughs for sale, but did not wish to take a horse in exchange. As soon, however, as money was introduced and every man was willing to take it in exchange for things, it became easy to sell a horse for money to any one of the men who wanted a horse, and then use the money thus obtained to buy a plough from any one of the men who had a plough to sell. So it is certain that the Britons bought and sold much more than the Bronze Men.

Julius Cæsar says in his book that the Britons also used bars of iron as money. And we know that he wrote the truth, for collections of iron bars have been

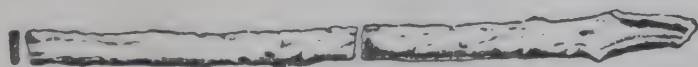


FIG. 33.—A Bar of Iron once used as Money by the Britons.

found, buried deep in the ground for safety just as if they had been coins. The mines, in which the Britons dug for the iron which they made into swords and axes and money, were in the districts we now call Sussex and Northamptonshire and Monmouthshire. If you walk about in these counties, you can still find their workings, and see the refuse they threw out from the furnaces in which they heated the iron to purify it. In the same way you can see in Cornwall the remains of the mines in which they dug for tin. On the coast of Cornwall, there is a little island called Saint Michael's Mount. At low water, it is quite easy for a man to drive a horse and cart to the island from the mainland. He can do that without getting his own feet wet, even if he walks beside the cart all the way. Very ancient writers tell us that the

ancient Britons, who mined in Cornwall for tin, used to take the tin to Saint Michael's Mount in carts. At the Mount there is a little harbour, and there in the ancient days the Britons put the tin on board ships, which carried it to the country which we call France, but which was known in those days as Gaul.

Of course they did not give up using bronze and stone and bone for making their weapons and ornaments. Even we use bronze, stone and bone, although we have discovered how to make very tough and useful steel out of iron, and know how to use many other kinds of metals.

People who buy and sell a great deal always want to travel about the country. So roads began to be made in Britain for the first time by the Britons. Sometimes when you are walking along a country road in England you are following a track first used by the trading Britons 2000 years ago. There is a road like that in Kent and Surrey. Nowadays it is called the Pilgrims' Way. You will learn later on what a pilgrim was.

There were good houses in Britain in the time we are reading about. Of course there were poor ones too. Many people lived in caves and pit-dwellings just like the men of the New Stone Age and the men of the Bronze Age. But finer houses than these began to rise in the Iron Age, when the Britons lived here. No one can tell exactly what they were like. It is thought that they had many rooms in them and corridors with doors giving entrance to the rooms. Only the richer Britons lived in these big houses. When they feasted in their houses, they sat round low tables. They seized their meat in

their fingers and tore it apart, or cut it with their knives. They drank from dishes made of earthenware and sometimes even of silver.

With their iron axes the Britons were able to cut down many trees. So there was much more ground on which to grow corn. The man who used bronze was not able to cut down trees so easily, and when he grew corn he had to use ground where there were no trees. Ground like this is not the best. Ground that has had trees once growing on it is usually much better. So the Britons got better crops from the soil than the men who lived before them. To-day, people discover the iron axes with which they cut down the trees, the sickles with which they reaped their crops, and the sharp hooks with which they cut branches off trees. In the ruins of their homes are found ploughshares and mill stones. But even in British times, there was a very great deal of forest, in which wild animals lived. The swine that were sent out to feed on beech nuts and on acorns had to be carefully guarded against the wolves.

Big villages began to grow up in these times. Some of them are towns to-day. "London" is a British word, so learned men think that the city of London had its beginning in British times. It must have been a small cluster of fishermen's huts in those days, standing on high gravel banks made green with grass and trees. As the dwellers looked out from their doorways across the river, they could see salt marshes, that were sometimes covered with water at high tide. If it was evening time, they certainly heard ducks quacking to one another. The river was clean then, and had salmon in it. Close by, the fishermen could get good hunting in the woods if

they wanted it. But there was no London Bridge, and not many ships could be seen.

But all parts of Britain were not civilised in the way described. In the hilly country of the west and north, there were people who did not know the use of iron, but used bronze and stone weapons only. They had no money in coins or iron bars. They had not been able to cut down many trees and get at the good soil. They had no real houses, but still lived in holes in the ground. They had no big villages. The parts in the south-east of Britain were the most civilised, because they were nearest the continent, from which people got knowledge of the best discoveries.

And even in the south and south-east, Britons were cruel men. Stonehenge was their temple just as it had been the temple of the bronze-using men. There were many other temples in the country and all were made of circles of stones. But Stonehenge was the biggest. Men called Druids were the priests, and used very cruel ways of worshipping God. When they said that God was angry, the people had to beg His pardon by allowing the Druids to offer up sacrifices of human beings. They put men into huge baskets, and burned them in the presence of the people.

And the Britons often fought among themselves. All over the country, men who walk about to-day on their feet instead of always travelling by train or motor car, find forts which the Britons put up. When one people suddenly attacked another people, the women and children and flocks and herds were hurriedly put inside the forts to be out of harm's way, and sometimes the men too ran to the forts for safety.

Even at their feasts, the Britons showed that they were not quite civilised yet. For after minstrels had sung of brave deeds of famous men, their listeners began to boast of their own. And when they had drunk too much, quarrels arose in which men were killed.

CHAPTER V. A ROMAN VILLA

FORTY-THREE years after the birth of Christ, the finest soldiers the world had ever known came against the Ancient Britons and conquered their land. These soldiers were called Romans, after their chief city, Rome, in Italy. By fighting for eight hundred years they had conquered almost all the known world, and so ruled Britain for nearly four hundred years, and have left many traces behind them. We can still see in many places the remains of their splendid roads, the ruins of the forts they built, and parts of the great walls they erected to defend their towns. In the southern parts of our country we find remains of their country homes which they called villas. These are not great castles with thick walls and towers built as a protection against enemies, but simple dwelling-houses unfitted for defence. That shows how peaceful the country was when first these villas were built under Roman rule.

On the heights of Greenwich Park, overlooking the Thames, there is a piece of pavement about two feet square, which people say was once part of the floor of one of these country houses. It is made of small pieces of red tile, each about a square inch in size, set in a bed of cement. No one can tell what part of the house it

belonged to ; perhaps it was a bit of the floor of a room, or of a passage or even of a stable.

Here then, was a Roman villa. What did it look like from the outside ? We can scarcely tell. Perhaps it was a long white-washed building with a corridor running its whole length. Or perhaps it stood round two sides of a square or round three, and had the corridor on its inner side. Some people think that only the lower walls of villas were built of stone, and that the upper walls were made of rough plaster, held together with a framework of wood. The roof was made of red tiles or slabs of grey stone. The floors of the lower rooms were raised a little on pillars, so that hot air from a furnace might circulate underneath. And in the walls were flues or pipes, so that the hot air might rise through the walls and warm them. The Romans



FIG. 34.—Roman Soldiers. One is shown marching, with his luggage tied to his spear, his helmet dangling from his right shoulder.

brought this way of warming houses from their old homes in Italy, and they found it very useful in the cold climate of Britain. The rooms on the ground floor were paved with small pieces of tile laid very closely together in cement. By using pieces of different colours, pictures were made on the floors of the living rooms.



FIG. 35.—Remains of a Roman Building, showing a floor raised on pillars so that hot air might circulate underneath it.

Some of these have been dug up to-day, and can be seen in museums. They are called mosaics or tessellated pavements. On the walls of the rooms were painted pictures. Somewhere in the villa we may be sure there was a bath, for the Romans were very careful to keep themselves clean. And certainly, too, there would be statues, either roughly made in Britain itself or brought

from Rome and Italy, where the best sculptors were, by merchants, and bought from them by the owner to decorate his villa. And beautiful dishes of red pottery would be seen everywhere in the house. Some of it



FIG. 36.—A Tessellated Pavement.

would be used for decoration, and some for eating from, and for holding things. And in the grounds near the house there would be an orchard, for the Romans loved orchards. They were fond of growing trees of all kinds, so there

would be cherry trees and apple trees, and others. People say that the Romans were the first to grow cherries in this country.

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Let us pretend we are visiting a Roman villa many years after the conquest. A great many trees have been cut down since the Romans first came to Britain, so there is more room to grow corn than there used to be in the time of the Ancient Britons. And many Romans who live near the villa we are reading about have made much money, by exporting corn to Roman armies who are fighting on the Continent. The owner of the villa does the same as his neighbours, and has a great many labourers who help him to till his lands. He does not pay wages, as our farmers do, but in return for work he gives his labourers a piece of land, on which they can grow corn for themselves. He also lends them cows and sheep, and lets them keep some of the calves and lambs for themselves. Our labourers to-day can leave their master, and go to another one if they like. But none of these labourers who work for the master of the villa are allowed to do that.

They live in huts not far from the villa. In one hut lives the man who makes the ploughs and hoes that are used on the farm, and shoes the farm horses. He gets his wood from the great forests, and his iron from the district which we now call Sussex. In another hut is the cobbler, who tans leather, and makes shoes and sandals for every one on the estate that wears them, and harness for the horses. There is a joiner, too, who is skilful in building barns and cowhouses, and in making carts.

Sometimes, however, things for the farm and the house are bought in London, and when anything requiring great skill has to be done, clever workers are sent for from there. The master has slaves too, who work for nothing.

We can imagine the owner of the villa strolling round his orchard in the spring. He looks at his apple blossom, and wonders whether the cherry trees which his grandfather brought from the Continent will have a good crop this year. When he looks across the river he does not see ugly chimneys and a thick haze of smoke, but marshy land, which is sometimes covered with water at high tide. And further off he can see forest. Drifting up the river with the tide are the merchants' boats from Gaul, the country which we now call France. And higher up are London Bridge and the red roofs of London town. The London, which the master of the villa looks at, has become a much bigger place than it was in the times of the ancient Britons. It has wharves and many warehouses, and streets noisy with the business of many people. There are huge buildings, such as temples and baths; and the inhabitants have lately built themselves a wall, because they fear that troublous times are coming, and that all the wealth which they have collected will be in danger. But if you and I could see that Roman London, we should think it a very small place indeed.

At some distance behind the villa there runs the Roman road from Dover to London. As the owner of the villa stands on the top of Shooter's Hill he can see the white ribbon of it stretching over what we call Blackheath, and making for the southern end of London Bridge. He has seen Roman Emperors ride along this road at the head of armies, and often he hears the steady tramp of

squads of recruits, who have been sent from all parts of the world to fill gaps in the Roman garrisons. Mere lads they are, thinking of homes on the Rhine and the Danube, which they will never see again. Sometimes their officers ride up to the door of the villa to beg a night's lodging, especially in winter time. They have nothing like the long nights of winter in their southern homes. Our friend of the villa takes them in, for he has a boy of his own serving as an officer with the armies in the north of Britain, and likes to send him messages, and parcels as well, on the baggage carts.

The officers and he talk a good deal together. He wants news from other parts of the Empire, and they wish to know something of the land to which they have come. He tells them that he supplies corn to the great armies lying on the Rhine, and that the chief trouble of his part of Britain comes from the pirate Saxons, who sometimes capture his ships, raid the coast, and even threaten to plunder London. Since the citizens have built their wall, his wife has never ceased to beg him to give up the villa, and live always in London. She says she cannot sleep peacefully at nights for fear of the pirates.

In winter time, the owner of the villa lives a good deal in London, partly because of his wife's fears, and partly because there is more company there. He is careful about religious things, and attends the services at the temples. Occasionally he goes to the little Christian church, which was built in his father's day. The Romans of an earlier time worshipped many strange gods, and our friend has some images of them in his hall. But missionaries of the Christian religion have been preaching

in Britain for many years, and he always is willing to talk to them, and listen to readings from their books about Christ. In his grandfather's time many Christians were persecuted, and awful tales are still remembered. But every one is more tolerant now, and the Christians have built themselves a church. Most of the people who go there are very poor, and that is one reason why the master and his wife do not go regularly. But they have no objection to their slaves and labourers going. They allow the missionaries to come to the house, and hold services, in which they teach Christian beliefs, sing hymns, and read the Gospels.

CHAPTER VI. AN ENGLISH VILLAGE LONG, LONG AGO

LET us suppose that 150 years have passed away, and that once more we are travelling along the Roman road to the villa on the heights of Greenwich. The road seems neglected. There are great holes in it. Its bridges are giving way. And when we reach the site of the villa we see nothing but ruins. The roof has long ago disappeared ; in places on the walls we see marks of fire and smoke. The decorated floors are covered with earth and grass. Here and there, sticking up, we can see what was once the head or arm of a statue. The river, too, that once was full of shipping is deserted, and London smoke, that once was so thick, is scarcely seen at all. London streets must be empty.

Something dreadful has happened. We begin to think that the pirates have been at work. And so they have. After the Roman soldiers had ruled and protected Britain for nearly 400 years, most of them sailed away to the Continent, and then the Saxon sea robbers burst into the land, and took most of it for their own. Men say that chiefs called Hengist and Horsa led the first comers, and that Kent was the part they conquered. But at the date of this visit, which we are pretending to make, others as fierce as they are busy conquering other places,

and all along the east and south coast of Britain the Roman towns are almost empty, and Roman villas are nothing but heaps of stones. The Roman language is no longer heard. Messengers from Rome no longer gallop along the roads; the harbours which the Romans used are filling up with sand and mud, and harbour walls are falling down. Churches are roofless and deserted.

After the pirates had driven the Britons from their homes into the forests, they built themselves little villages in which to live. As we stand on the site of the old Roman villa in Greenwich Park, we can see one of these villages below us on the banks of the Thames. It is just a cluster of ten or twelve wooden halls. The owners, who built them and live in them, are our forefathers. Nowadays, if you walk in the country, you find farms and other houses standing by themselves. The people who live in them know there are policemen to protect them, and that the risk of attack is very small. But in the days when Englishmen were conquering this land, there were angry Britons living in the forests, who hated their conquerors. And so the settlers whom we are watching have built their houses in a group, so that families may be near to protect one another. The houses, however, are not close together in a row, all touching one another. Each man has built his home separate from all others in its own enclosure, partly because he wishes to be free from the prying eyes of his neighbours, and partly because the risk of one house catching fire from another is thus lessened. Round the whole village are a ditch, and an earthen wall with a wooden fence on top, to serve as a defence against robbers and wild beasts.

The inhabitants are tall, strong men, with fair skins, light eyes of blue, and long flaxen hair, which they comb carefully with combs of wood and bone. On their feet they have rough leather shoes. Their bodies are covered



FIG. 37.—English Warrior.

with tunics or shirts which they fasten loosely round the waist with a buckled belt. Some of them wear a cloak above the tunic, and fasten it with a brooch above the right shoulder. They have ceased to be pirates now, but are still soldiers. The usual weapons are the spear and shield. The spear is of ash wood, 6 feet long and tipped with a grey iron head. All the shields are of wood. Their width is about 2 feet, and in the centre, where most blows fall in a fight, there is a knob of hammered iron. Some of the wealthy

men have iron swords about 30 inches long, which they carry in scabbards strapped to their left sides. The women wear long cloaks descending to the feet. Their sleeves are loose and wide. Their heads are covered with a hood.

Had we been looking down on the village at dawn, the first figure to be seen would have been the cowherd, collecting from the cowsheds all the cows of the village,

and driving them to the pasture outside. There the shepherd has been guarding his flock all night in the fold, and not very far away, on the outskirts of the wood, is the swineherd with his grunting charges, at work searching for acorns or beech nuts, or other food. If it is the early autumn, cows, sheep, and pigs will look fat enough ; if it is late spring after a hard winter, their bones will be sticking through their hides, and they will scarcely have strength to crawl. For in the far-away days which we are pretending to visit there was little winter food for animals. Of course there was hay, but only very little. In the autumn, therefore, there was a great killing and salting down of sheep, cows, and pigs to serve as winter meat for the villagers. The animals that were kept alive struggled along as best they might on what they could get to eat in the fields, and on scanty supplies of hay. But the starvation was so severe, that many died, and those that survived were only half the size of the sheep and cows that we see to-day.



FIG. 38.—English Lady.

In the winter and spring, soon after dawn, appear other villagers with their ploughs and oxen. The plough is clumsy, and made of wood. It cannot go deep into the soil as our ploughs do, but only scratches the surface. Few men have one of their own ; it is usually the possession

of several men. Sometimes eight oxen are required to pull it. In the harvest time the plough is out of sight; instead of it the villagers bring out sickles or curved



FIG. 39.—Swineherds and Swine.

knives to reap the crops. Turnips, cabbages, mangelwurzel, and many other crops that we have now, are unknown. The villagers usually grow wheat, rye or oats for bread, and barley to brew beer with.



FIG. 40.—Shepherds.

Nowadays farmers grow their crops in separate fields surrounded by walls, hedges, or fences. But in the early days, which we are reading about, farmers did not separate their cornfields in this way. Outside the village there were usually three very large corn fields, much bigger

than the fields you see to-day. On all of these, each farmer had a share, which he separated from the shares of other men only by a narrow strip of grass. Every

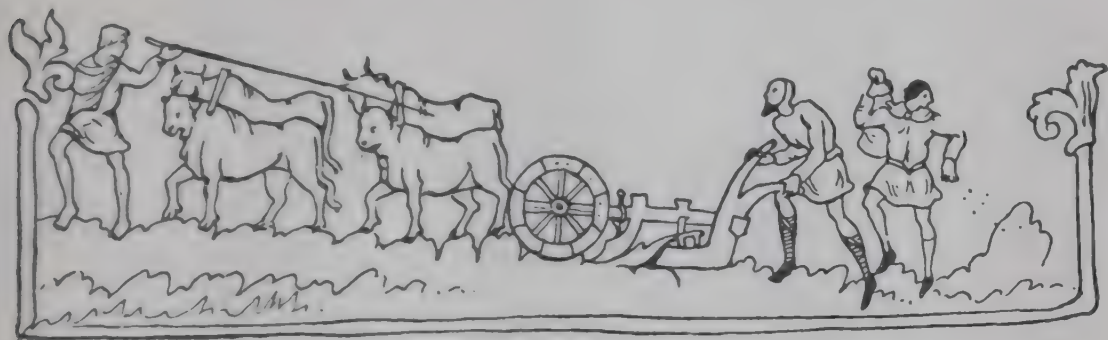


FIG. 41.—Ploughmen.

year one of these very big fields had no crop growing on it. In this way it had a rest, (and) was called the fallow field. So in each year there were only two fields which needed to be reaped.

Farmers to-day have also separate fields in which to

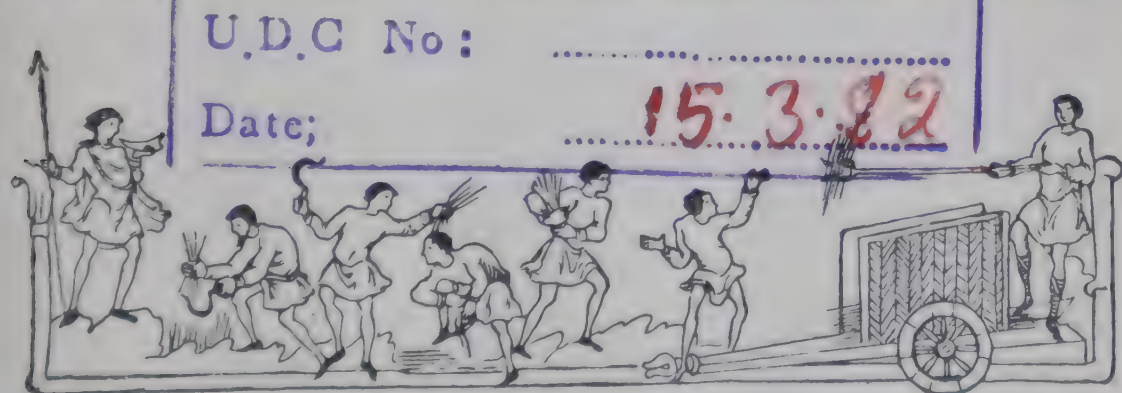


FIG. 42.—Harvesting.

feed their cows and sheep. But long ago every farmer's cows and sheep fed together with the cows and sheep of all the other villagers on the waste grounds outside, which were not good enough to grow crops, or were not wanted for this purpose. There was also one big hay field. It was

usually on the banks of the river, and each villager had a

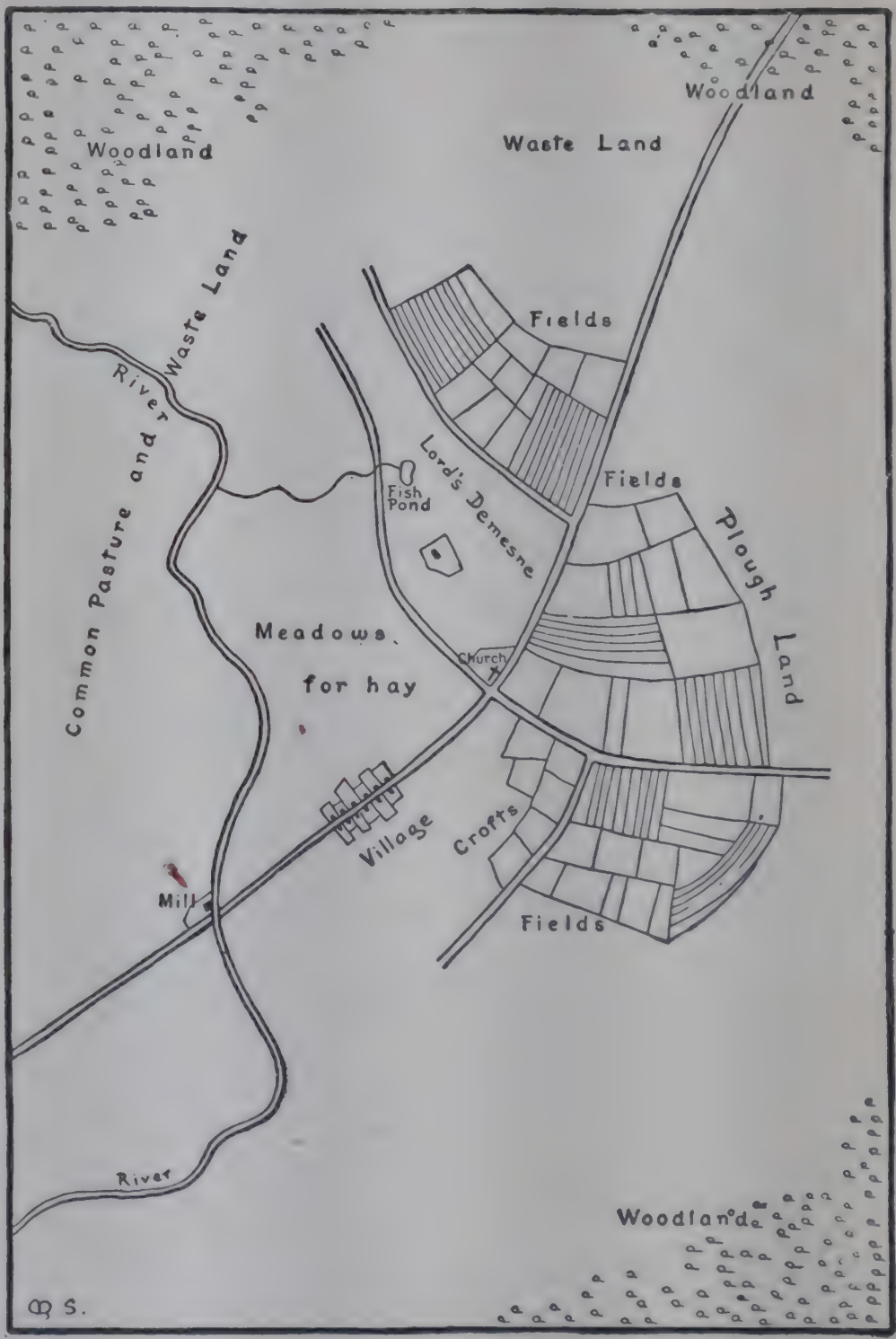


FIG. 43.—Plan of an Early English Village.

share. So if we were really paying a visit to this village,

we should see down below us all these fields and hay grounds quite distinctly, and close beside us on the hill we should see the cattle grazing.

But there is much work to be done besides minding animals and crops. If we were to walk through the village we might see villagers mending their thatched roofs, and putting up barns and cowhouses. We might hear the smith hammering at his forge upon axes, sickles and spears, or see him mending ploughshares. Perhaps there would be village children looking on. We might see boys carrying home wild honey from the woods, or hear girls laughing and gossiping as they make cheese and butter. Or, if the weather were hot and the cream were slow to turn into butter, we might hear them grumble that some wicked fairy has been in the dairy and cast a spell over it. Standing in the doorways there might be women busy with the spinning of wool or flax into thread. Others might be making baskets out of osiers and reeds which the boys have brought home.

And we might hear men grumbling ~~over~~ their ale cans about the king's demands for food of all kinds. For, instead of paying taxes in money, as we do now, every villager pays his taxes in food, like salt beef, bacon, eggs, chickens, honey, cheese, beer, and other things. He sends these on horses' backs or in carts to where the king wants them, and there the king's steward carefully measures and weighs what is sent.

If it be evening, and work be over, there will be sounds of merrymaking and drinking in some houses. Some singer or reciter has perhaps come, who can tell long stories of ancient heroes, or sing songs as he plays on the harp. All the villagers crowd in to listen, and to the

important men the host's wife and daughters carry round beer, which they pour into drinking-horns. And perhaps in the middle of it all, the king's messenger will rush in breathless, with an order for all men to join the army at once. Then there will be a hurried taking down of spears, swords, and shields from the hooks on the wall; wives and sisters will help to buckle sword-belts on their husbands and brothers, and to polish helmets and sword-blades. Soon there will be waving of hands in farewell, and the village with its animals will be left in charge of the old men, women, and boys.

Perhaps some of the warriors will be killed in battle. Friends will bring home their bodies, and after dressing them in their best clothes and putting on them their jewellery and weapons, they will carry them to the cemetery on the top of the hill, and bury them there with lamentations. If you take a walk to-day along the heights of Greenwich Park, not far from the Observatory and the remains of the Roman villa, you may still see the little mounds, which mark the last resting places of the first Englishmen who lived in the little village of Greenwich. In the men's graves swords and spears have been found; in the women's, work-boxes, ear-rings, and other things that women love.

CHAPTER VII. THE CONVERSION OF THE ENGLISH TO CHRISTIANITY

OUR early forefathers were not Christians. They believed that there were spirits in wind, trees, and water, because they saw and felt these moving. And, as the names of our days remind us, they worshipped the sun and the moon. That is why we have a Sunday and a Monday. They worshipped also Thor the god of Thunder, and called Thursday after him, and Woden, the god of war, and called Wednesday after him. When winter changed into spring, they thought a goddess had caused it. And the growth of the corn was, in their minds, the work of a goddess too. So they had many gods and goddesses. But we believe in one God only.

How the little village, which stood on the site of Greenwich, first heard of the Christian faith we cannot be sure, for no one has told us. But we may suppose it happened in the following manner.

One day there came to the village two or three strange-looking men with black hair and long black robes, and of a foreign speech. The villagers at first took them for magicians, and were frightened of them, till one of the newcomers, who spoke English, cried out to them that they had come from the king with good news. "You," he cried to the crowd, "are worshippers of spirits. We have come to tell you of the true God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, whom your King Ethelbert now worships. Let us come near, for we wish to do you good, and not harm." And so the villagers, who had heard of their

king's conversion, beckoned to the strangers to advance without fear. Then, standing in a circle, they listened with eagerness to the story of Jesus Christ. The interpreter, who had come with the strangers, told the villagers that Jesus had bade all men love their neighbours as themselves, and had promised eternal life to all who believed in Him. When the villagers heard this they thought it good. For all could understand that if all men loved one another, none would be enemies, but all would be friends, and cruelty, war, and slavery would be at an end.



FIG. 44.—A Missionary.

But what interested the hearers most was the promise of eternal life in heaven to all who believed. All men hate death, and love life. And a religion which promised that death would be only the beginning of a happier life was sure to be accepted. The whole village was quick to follow the example of King Ethelbert. Heathen temples and images were destroyed, and soon the missionaries were busy, baptizing all in the waters of the Thames.

For many a long year there was no church built, neither was there a missionary living in the village. The Gospel was only preached when missionaries came from Canterbury, the city of King Ethelbert. And as their visits were few and far between, no villager properly understood his new religion. It took many years to

educate enough priests to supply one to live always in each village of the kingdom. Until there were enough of them, Christianity was a weak religion. At last, however, a priest began to live in the village, and soon he called on his hearers to build him a church. It was only a wooden one that he asked for, and a very small one. When it was built there were no seats, no beautiful carved wood-work, no organ. There were no glass windows; so the inside was only dimly lit by light from the door or from chinks in the walls.

Here every Sunday came the villagers to hear the priest speak of God and Christ; and earnestly and quietly did they listen, for all were eager to attain life after death. Sometimes on Sundays the villagers took Holy Communion, for in this way, said the priest, they would be better people. And it was ordered that every one should be taught to say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Communion Service in English.

Outside the church was the churchyard, which the priest consecrated for use as a burial ground. He insisted that all burials should take place here, and so the old cemetery on the hill-top was deserted. The old custom of burying the dead in their armour and ornaments died out, for the priest said that no man, however rich, could carry jewels, weapons, and clothes to heaven.

The priest, if he were a good one, lived a busy life, not merely on Sundays, but on all days. He visited the sick and the dying, and often took holy bread to their houses. He was always at hand when men and women wished to confess their sins and to receive forgiveness. He was present at all burials. He watched over the

church to see that the roof was watertight and the walls strong. He obtained cups for the sacraments, and saw that they were kept clean. He kept candles for the altar and a clean altar-cloth. He chose the music that was sung, and tried to teach it to his congregation, so that service on Sunday might be as like as possible to the service in Rome, where men knew how to do things well. To the weak and old and sick he gave gifts of food. But

all priests did not do as much as this; some were lazy, and some were ignorant.

Every priest had a share in the big fields of the village, and had cows, sheep and pigs which fed along with the others. Besides this every villager was ordered by the king to pay to the priest a tenth or tithe of his corn and of the calves and lambs that were born during the year. In this way the priest was able to live and help the poor.

But frequently a good priest was disheartened in his work, for often the villagers would not attend church, but instead would buy, sell, hunt and drink on Sundays. And his orders to them that they

should love one another were not easily obeyed. Men still fought together, bought and sold slaves, and



FIG. 45.—A Bishop.

were cruel to the weak. Often the priest could not get the food and other things which he needed. Sometimes the people went back to their old gods. If their crops were not ripening properly owing to bad weather, they thought the old gods were angry, and that it had been a sin to desert them. Then they slunk away into the forest, where the priest could not see them, and held heathen festivals, and offered up prayers to spirits. And when he tried to punish them for this by threatening them with everlasting torment, or by ordering them to fast, or do penance, they laughed at him.

But when the bishop, his master, came to the village to learn whether he was doing his work well, he encouraged the priest to persevere, and bade him be an example of good living and gentleness to all his flock. And so the good priest all through his life fought hard against wickedness during the week, and on Sundays he promised the happiness of heaven to the good, and punishment after death to the sinner. Thus slowly men began to lead better lives, and be gentler to others. But the work is not done yet, for it is almost as difficult for us as for our forefathers to love our neighbours as ourselves.

CHAPTER VIII. WHAT THE NORTHERN PIRATES DID

AFTER the building of the church, the village prospered. Some of the inhabitants increased their wealth and gave presents to the priest, so that he had silver cups, candlesticks, and rich altar-cloths for his services on Sundays and holy days, and his robes were costly with gold and silver threads, when he was in church. In the houses of the villagers the number of bracelets, rings, and ear-rings grew, for the dead no longer carried their wealth with them to the grave, as they had done in pagan days. There were more inhabitants than in the beginning, and some of the houses were larger, better built, and more finely finished, than the first that had arisen 400 years before.

But as riches increased, men began to hate soldiering. When kings sent word to collect an army only a very few went from the village. Most of the inhabitants preferred farming to fighting, and forgot how to use the spears and shields, which hung rusting on the walls of their houses. The ditch which their forefathers had dug was filled up with rubbish and the wall of earth with the fence on top was broken down.

Upon this peaceful village ruin descended suddenly. Nosing her way across the North Sea from Denmark or

Norway, came a war-boat with a cargo of pirates armed with swords and battle-axes and shields. The boat was 75 feet long and 15 feet wide, and could carry about seventy men. Sometimes, when the wind blew favourably, they hoisted a sail. At other times they thrust out their oars, sixteen on each side, and rowed in time to a warlike chorus. Over the sides of the ship, when she was sailing, the warriors hung their round shields

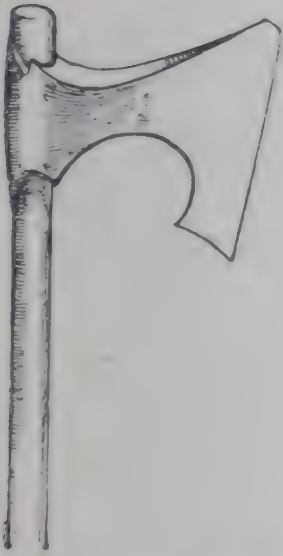


FIG. 46.—Danish Battle-axe.
The sharp edge of the axe
is 6 or 7 inches long.



FIG. 47.—The Byrnie, a shirt made of
steel links.

painted black and yellow. Like a dappled sea monster the boat crept up the river, and as the dawn reddened in the east her crew sighted the village and its church. With war song hushed the lofty prow was turned to the land, and gently beached upon the shore. Out from the hold and over the side poured the crew of warriors grasping axes and shields, and wearing steel caps, and steel shirts called byrnies. Tall, gaunt, and cruel-looking men they were, with faces shining with

delight ; for to burn houses and kill defenceless villagers was work they loved.

Suddenly a warning cry from the heights above broke the silence. The shepherd, who had watched his flock by night, had seen the pirate band creeping to the village, and was shouting to the cowherd collecting his cows in the street. Before the cowherd could understand his danger and wake the village, the enemy had cut him down among his cows. Sleepy villagers rushed from their doors only to be killed. The pirates set fire to the wooden houses by thrusting torches into the thatch, and men, women, and children were burned in the flames.

In the turmoil, bands of pirates robbed the wealthier houses and then turned towards the church. In this building many survivors of the village had collected, and behind closed doors were calling on God for help. The crash of the battle-axes on the timbers of the door told them their end was near. The enemy killed every living thing within the sacred building. They carried off all the holy cups and dishes of precious metal and all the altar-cloths, and priestly robes. They wrenched all metal work from its place. Then they set fire to the thatched roof because they loved destruction.

By this time bands of pirates could be seen carrying booty to the ship. Others were driving thither cows, sheep and pigs to supply food for the journey home. Others were sent to climb the heights and learn what they could of the great city further up the river. As they stood upon the old pagan cemetery, they saw London five miles away. With greedy eyes they gazed upon it. "What a city to plunder !" they said to one another. Sorrowfully they agreed that their numbers were not

large enough, and that for the present they must content themselves with plundering villages.

Down below, their chief was calling loudly for them to return to the boat, for by this time the wakeful shepherd was rousing the neighbouring villages, and foes were collecting. Long, however, before the English were ready, the pirate rowers were far down the river, leaving behind them on the horizon a tall pillar of smoke still marking the site of the ruined village. When they were out of sight, the English, who had fled in terror to the woods, returned to save what they could of their burning homes.

Next winter was a sorrowful time for the survivors. More than half the population had been killed. Many cows, sheep, and pigs had been carried off. Of those that had remained after the raid, some were salted down for winter food. But of those that were kept alive many died of starvation, for the hay and corn that had been gathered for their winter food had been burnt. Death came even to men, women, and children in the winter, for the supply of corn was too scanty for them, and disease attacked their weakened bodies. So that many who had escaped the pirates died of plague.

A band of robbers, hearing of their weakened state, came and carried off much of what food and property still remained in the village. So the new cowherd had few cows to collect every morning, and the number of pigs in the woods was small. When the time came to plough and sow there were not enough oxen or men to do all the work. And there was very little corn to spare for seed, so that much rich corn land became waste, and ploughs rusted and fell to pieces. For many a long year

houses that had been burnt were not rebuilt. The inhabitants only numbered about a quarter of what they had been.

For long the church walls were in ruins. There were no services on Sundays ; no christenings nor marriages nor proper burials. Even the bishop, who should have come to confirm the few young men and women, stayed away, because there was no church nor priest's house to live in. And for a long time they were always afraid that the pirates might come again, so that for many months the villagers arranged for a watchman to look out from the heights at night, and give warning in case of an attack. Only in this way could they sleep soundly at night.

Even the king himself suffered, for the food taxes, which he should have received from the village, could not be paid.

Many other villages besides this one were attacked and ruined by the Northern pirates. Soon the robbers came to stay, and conquered much land, so that when Alfred became king in 871 nearly all the north and east part of England was an enemy's country. Many expected that the rest would soon be conquered too.

These pirates are called by many names, such as Northmen, Norsemen, Danes, Vikings. We shall call them Northmen.

CHAPTER IX. HOW KING ALFRED SAVED HIS KINGDOM OF WESSEX FROM THE NORTHMEN

WHEN Alfred became king in the year 871, the Northmen had been burning villages and churches for eighty years. At first they did not stay long when they landed, but later, when they learned that the English had no navy to fight on the sea, and no good soldiers to defend their homes, more and more began to come, till great armies of them conquered a large part of England and settled there. When Alfred began to reign, almost all England north of the Thames was held by them. We can tell where they settled, for



FIG. 48.—England and Wessex when Alfred became king.

they often called their towns by names ending in the syllable "by" like Derby, Whitby and Kirby. Even the great city of London was captured at last and plundered.

When Alfred was about 30 years old and had been king for seven years, a great host of Northmen burst into his kingdom, which was called Wessex. It was that part of England which lies south of the Thames. At first it seemed as though that part of England was going to be conquered like the rest, for Alfred had to fly to the island of Athelney in the marshes of Somerset. There he lost a gold enamelled jewel which was found again 800 years afterwards.

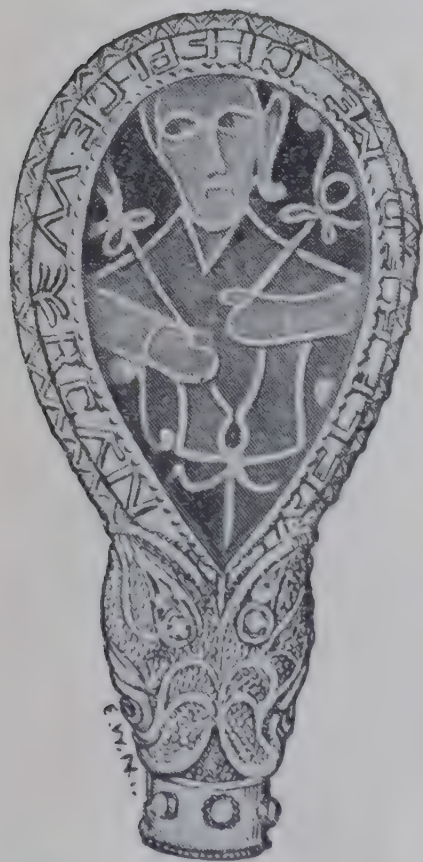


FIG. 49.—King Alfred's Jewel.

But the English loved their king, and believed that he could defeat the enemy. So they gathered round him, and after some fighting compelled the leader of the Northmen, Guthrum, to promise peace, and go away to the other parts which he had conquered. In the years of peace

which followed, Alfred worked hard to make his kingdom strong again, for he knew that soon the enemy would make another attack.

First of all he determined to call on the richer men to help. These men were now called Thaness, and had more land, cattle and horses than ordinary men. And

so they had better swords, and wore shirts made of tough steel rings. They also armed their followers, and gave them steel shirts and good horses. With their help, Alfred repaired the walls of many towns on the coast and at the mouths of rivers. Sometimes he built a wall



FIG. 50.—A Thane.

round a town which had never had a wall before. Whenever he rebuilt a wall, or put up a new one, he called the town a borough. In this way he hoped to prevent the pirates landing on the coast or sailing up the rivers, for with the help of the Thanes he put good and well-armed soldiers in the boroughs, who were to rush out against any Northmen who landed on the coast. And no enemy's

ship dared to sail up a river past a borough for fear that the brave soldiers in the borough would put a chain across the river, and so prevent their return to the sea. There were a great many of these boroughs in Wessex. Here are the names of a few, Southwark, Rochester, Hastings, Chichester, Southampton and Exeter.



FIG. 51.—Wall and Ditch of a Borough.

Had you been alive then you would have seen all the Thanes or wealthy men, who lived about ten or twenty miles from Southwark or Exeter or other borough, riding into these places at the head of their servants. Sometimes they dug deep ditches round the towns, and threw up big walls of earth with a strong wooden fence on the top. Sometimes they merely cleaned out an old

ditch, and repaired an old wall and fence. And riding round to watch the men at work you would have seen the king's servants, and sometimes the king himself. Then they built houses within the walls, and each rich man left there one or two or three men, according to his wealth. These men were to be good soldiers, and have good spears and shields.

Then you might have seen cartloads of corn and droves of cows and sheep and pigs being driven into these boroughs. The corn was put into granaries, and the animals were killed and salted for food, so that even if the Northmen surrounded the place there would be no starvation inside. And every day the soldiers kept guard on the walls and gates, and repaired them if necessary. And they kept the houses within in good order; for if the Northmen came, the king's orders were that all the Thanes with the rest of their soldiers should hurry into the fort, to prevent them sailing up rivers, or marching about the countryside to destroy houses and men.

There were very strict rules about life in these boroughs. If robbers attacked any man who was travelling to one of them, the king commanded that, if they were caught, they should be punished more heavily than usual. For the traveller might be taking food to the borough, to help to feed the king's soldiers; or he might be on his way to do joinery, or thatching work to keep the houses in repair; or he might be one of the soldiers going back to his duty. And if any soldier in the borough fought with another soldier, the punishment was very severe, for men who fight together hate one another, and will not help one another in the day of battle. Alfred liked his soldiers to be good friends and

so he allowed them to form clubs and hold jolly festivals, for in this way men make friends. And often these clubs gave feasts. But before the feast began it was the custom for all the members to go to church together, for good men make the best soldiers.

So Alfred found it necessary to build and repair churches. We read that he carefully set aside a part of his income every year to help in this work. We may be sure he inquired whether there were churches for his soldiers in Southwark and other boroughs. But churches are no use without good priests. Alfred wrote in one of his books that south of the Thames, when he became king, there were no priests who understood Latin. All the scriptures in those days were in Latin. So a priest, who could not read it, could not read the Bible, and must have been a very poor priest indeed. Therefore, to make good soldiers, Alfred had to make good priests. He gathered together all the learned men he could, and built schools, and picked good men to be educated for priest's work. And he translated good books out of Latin into English, so that more people might be able to read them. So had we lived in a borough, we should have seen churches being built, and priests coming to them, and bringing with them books which Alfred had given them to help them in their work.

Now Alfred knew that some Thanes would grumble because they had to maintain houses in the boroughs, and had to keep soldiers and send food to them. He knew that some of them, in time of peace, would say: "Oh, the Northmen will not come again," and would no longer send soldiers. And so the walls and gates would break down. To prevent this he ordered, that three times a year all

the Thanes should come from their country houses to a meeting in their borough, and there hear from the king's officer what Thanes had sent the proper number of soldiers and the proper amounts of food, and kept the houses in repair. And perhaps the officer would say to one 'Thane: "Thane Eadric, your part of the wall has a spring near it, which carries away great quantities of earth from the wall, and weakens it in wet weather. You must send workers to put down pipes to drain the water away." And to another he might say: "Thane Aelfric, your soldier is always fighting and quarrelling. You must take him away and send a better one." And to another: "Thane Ethelred, you are not sending enough food to your house in the borough." Sometimes Thanes stayed away from these meetings because they were lazy and said: "What is the good of all this work and expense? We hate being ordered about by the king's officers." Then the rule was that the chief Thane of the borough should ride to these Thanes' houses, and seize all their goods. For Alfred was determined that every man, who could, should help to make his country strong to resist the enemy.

So the boroughs became strong, and had many people in them besides Thanes and soldiers. For there was safety from the Northmen. And no man in the boroughs dared wrong another man. And the roads leading to the boroughs were safe. So merchants liked taking their goods there and living and trading there. Nowadays, when you buy anything valuable, the seller gives you a receipt for your money. So if he comes to you later and says: "Pay me the money you owe," you can prove you have paid it by showing him his own

receipt. But in far-off days, men could not write, and did not give receipts. So often bad men tried to get payment twice. In the boroughs there were men appointed to be present at all sales, and be witnesses when money was paid, so that if a bad man tried to get two payments, the men, who had seen the money paid, could be sent for. That was another reason why men liked to live and trade in the boroughs.

In this way, strong forts grew all along the boundaries of Wessex so that no Northmen could invade the land or sail up the rivers. For when they tried to make an invasion, the Thanes and their soldiers first collected in the boroughs, and then, when they were ready, went against the enemy, and almost always defeated them, for they were good soldiers and well-armed. So Alfred saved the south of England, which was called Wessex, from the Northmen.

CHAPTER X. A GREAT NOBLE AND HIS VILLAGE

WE have seen that during King Alfred's reign, a great deal was going on in the boroughs, and that by building these, and putting soldiers in them, Alfred saved that part of England which was called Wessex. The kings who came after him gradually conquered all the parts in which the Northmen had settled, and made England into one kingdom. But during all these wars a great deal was happening in the little villages, as well as in the boroughs. So let us pretend to visit a village, and see where the Thanes and the soldiers of the boroughs came from, and how they got their food.

One day, soon after Alfred had made peace with Guthrum and was beginning to build boroughs, there came riding into a little village in Wessex a royal messenger, who asked for Thane Ethelbert. He was directed to the biggest house. It was made of strong wooden beams roughly trimmed with axes. In places could still be seen the tough knots and ends of branches which the workers had not removed. The building was about 60 feet long and 16 feet wide. Most of it was taken up by a long hall, in which the inhabitants lived, ate and slept. But there were a few small rooms opening off it, in one of which the Thane and his wife slept.

In another he kept his clothes. In another his steward worked. Quite separate from this big building was the kitchen, with a pantry attached for keeping food. Thanes liked to have their living rooms far away from their kitchens, because wooden kitchens so easily catch fire.

Round all the buildings was a rough wooden fence with a gateway in it.

Through the gateway went the king's messenger and into the hall. The Thane sat on a platform at one end, slightly raised above the rest of the floor. From his seat he could see all his followers as they sat at table, or took their rest on benches. He was clothed in embroidered tunic and mantle. At his right shoulder he wore a costly brooch.



FIG. 52.—Thane seated.

Round his middle was a leather belt held together by an enamelled buckle. On the table beside him were his drinking horn, and the bucket from which he refilled it. Hanging on the walls were the byrnies or shirts of steel links, the swords, spears and shields with which, in time of need, he armed himself and his followers. And high

Above all were the massive and smoke-stained beams of the roof.

Standing in the centre of the hall, the messenger spoke: "King Alfred bids you ride with men to Lyng, and there help to build a borough. You must leave soldiers there, when the borough is built, keep houses in repair for the soldiers to live in, and send them food to eat." Thane Ethelbert was troubled and asked: "What will King Alfred do for me if I do this for him?" To which the messenger replied thus: "There are lands in this village, which are not cultivated, for the Northmen have killed the owners. These the king will give you that you may raise corn and cattle for food. And in addition, all the food which your village used to send the king shall be yours. For many years the king has not received the proper amounts. Indeed, in some years since the coming of the Northmen, he has received none at all. Sometimes the hay, which your village sent, was bad. Sometimes the corn was insufficient. Sometimes the salt beef and pork became putrid on the way. Sometimes the carts broke down, and the pack horses fell and rolled over on the food which they were carrying. All these food taxes the king will give to you. You live here and can easily collect them, and out of them you can feed your soldiers." To this the Thane replied: "I shall do the king's commands, for he is a good king." And so the borough was built by the Thane with others helping. And it was filled with soldiers.

But in the village, and in all the other villages where the Thanes lived, there was much to be done. The deserted lands which had been given to the Thane had to be cultivated. Corn had to be bought for seed, and

ploughs and teams of oxen and men had to be found. Cows and sheep and pigs had to be brought from places where the enemy had never been, to be put in the places of those which had been carried off, or had died of starvation in the winter. So the Thane sent word about all the district to men who had no lands, no oxen, no ploughs, no seed, no cattle, to come to him, and he would give them all that was necessary. So men, whose villages



FIG. 53.—Harvesting Cart going Uphill.

had been ruined by the pirates, went to the Thane, and got lands and ploughs and other things once more. And in return they paid rent in the form of food and work to the Thane. From all these lands there came to the Thane's house salt pork, beef, mutton, honey, corn, beer, ducks, hens, eggs, wool, hides and other things. So at the house, barns and store houses had to be built, and in them was collected the food, which later on was sent to feed the Thane's soldiers in the borough. Some of the land, however, was kept by the Thane himself, and the men, to whom he had given land, had to plough and

sow this land for him, and reap it, as well as do work on their own lands. And they had to build barns for him, and thatch them, and look after his fences and keep his corn mill in order, and guard his oxen, sheep and pigs. So that with their own lands to manage and the Thane's work to do, these villagers had to work very hard.

The other people in the village who had been there before the Northmen came, and who had managed to survive and keep their own lands, were much better off than the new comers, for they had only to pay to the Thane the food taxes which formerly they had paid to the king. But they soon found that the Thane was more particular than the king had been about getting the right quantities of food from them, and would accept nothing bad. Of course he had a great deal to do for the king, and did not get everything for himself.

The Thane could not look after all business himself, so he picked out an agent or steward, who was fit for the work. And when villagers came to the big house in the morning to ask what they were to work at that day, the steward would say to some: "Take your plough and oxen and plough the lord's land." And to others he would say: "Carry food in your carts to the borough"; and to others: "Mend the mill wheel," or "Thatch the barns," or "Set mouse traps in them," or "Catch wild duck," or "Send your boys out to look for honey," or "Fell timber for a new room at the big house," or "Gather firewood."

And when they came to pay rents, he would carefully count the eggs and hens, and weigh the pork and beef, and look to see if it had been properly salted, and measure the honey and the beer, and enter up in his

accounts how much each man had paid. And, probably, every one would hate him for being such a hard man, and grumble against him when he was not near. But the steward, we may be sure, cared nothing for their grumbling, so long as he could find the food and supplies to enable his master to do his work for the king.

So it was not merely hard fighting by the Thanes and their soldiers of the boroughs that saved Wessex. Much hard work and much suffering had to be undergone by the villagers at home, toiling in the fields in all weathers, and doing the bidding of masterful stewards.

In this way the Thane became a very important man indeed, and a friend of the king. So that any villager who wanted help always went to him for it. If a man had enemies who threatened to do him harm, he begged the Thane to protect him. The Thane always asked: "What will you give me if I do?" Then the villager offered something. Perhaps he would say: "I am willing to work for you at joinery one day every week, for I am a good joiner." And so when the bargain was made the villager could go home, and no longer fear that he might be killed some dark night, or that he might wake to find his barns had been set on fire by his enemy; for the Thane would heavily punish any one who harmed his joiner.

Sometimes, in times of great danger, the kings called out to battle not only the Thanes and the soldiers of the boroughs, whose only business was fighting, but villagers as well, whose real business was farming. Then many went to the Thane and said: "I am too weak to march," or "I cannot leave my crops," or "I have an old mother to look after." Then the Thane said: "I shall find a

soldier to go instead of you, if you will work longer hours for me at harvest time, or give me extra supplies of meat, or be my blacksmith." And so gradually there came to be two classes of men in the village. There were the Thane's soldiers whose work was war, and the Thane's dependents who tilled their own land and his, and supplied him and his soldiers with food, and carted it to his barns and then to the borough.

CHAPTER XI. THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS

ALFRED'S successes were continued by his son Edward and his three grandsons, until all England was once more ruled by English kings. Then there came a king in whose reign there was so little fighting that he was called Edgar the Peaceful. In his time, people began to act as if they believed that there never would be any more war against the Northmen. They let the walls of the boroughs go to ruin ; the Thanes ceased to send supplies of food and soldiers ; and the houses which had once been soldiers' homes fell into the hands of shopkeepers and merchants who could not fight.

Then in the time of a king called Ethelred the Redeless ["Redeless" means "lacking in counsel"], eighty years after Alfred's death, the Northmen came again with great conquering armies. Ethelred was almost helpless. He gathered many armies and fleets against his enemies, but owing to the treachery of his great men the English never won victories. Amongst the Thanes had arisen some very powerful nobles, who had great lands of their own and great armies. These men would not join together to fight against the invaders, but quarrelled among themselves. Sometimes, when a battle was about to begin, they deserted with all their soldiers, or pretended to be sick and would not fight.

And when the Northmen attacked the lands of one or two of these nobles, the others did nothing to help; they seemed pleased to see enemies doing harm to Englishmen. Among them were one or two true men, who fought well for their country, but most of them were foul traitors not worthy to be called Englishmen. To-day, if a great man does wrong, two policemen or even one are strong enough to arrest him. But King Ethelred was helpless, for his nobles had armies, so the traitors were not punished as they should have been.

So the Northmen again did as they pleased with English houses and cattle and churches, and murdered helpless country folk, until despair settled down upon the land, and men said one Northman was worth ten Englishmen. Even Wessex, that had once beaten the plunderers so soundly, could now do nothing, and her armies, instead of chasing hard after the Northmen, as they had done in Alfred's day, turned tail and kept as far away as possible. Indeed, the English armies sometimes did as much harm to the country as the Northmen, for they marched into the villages and carried off cattle and corn for food, so that the villagers starved. Very very often Ethelred gave the enemy money to go away, and this money was called Danegeld. "Geld" is the same word as "gold." "Dane" is another name for a Northman. The huge sums which England paid show how rich she had become since Alfred's time. Far away in Denmark and Norway and Sweden, men to-day sometimes find old English coins, which they think may have once been part of the Danegeld paid in Ethelred's time.

For thirty years the Danes troubled the land, till at last one of them, Canute, who was King of Denmark,

became King of England also. Although he was at first a cruel pagan and had done much harm to England, Englishmen came to love him, for he was converted to Christianity, and ruled England well, and gave her peace. In return many Englishmen went across the North Sea to help him to add Norway to his two other kingdoms.

When he died in 1035, his two sons, who succeeded one after the other, turned out to be horrid men. So Englishmen were glad when both died after short reigns.

In Normandy, across the Channel, a son of Ethelred the



FIG. 54.—Edward the Confessor on his throne. This picture is copied from the Bayeux Tapestry. Do not think it is a good likeness, for it was made with a needle and worsted.

Redeless had lived for a long time. He was called Edward. Englishmen chose him to be king ; for twenty-four years he sat on the throne, and because he was a very holy man he is called Edward the Confessor, and Saint Edward. In his day the nobles were too strong for him to manage. One in particular, Godwine Earl of Wessex, was very

powerful, and Edward had to do what he was told by him and by his son Harold. These two opposed his dearest wish, that his cousin William, Duke of Normandy, should obtain the throne on his death. So Edward, with resignation, gave himself to hunting, praying and church building.

With loving care he watched his masons at work on his abbey at Westminster. But when the church was finished, and ready to be consecrated to the service of God, Edward was too ill to be present, and his wife had to take his place at the ceremony on December 28, 1065. Eight days later he died on January 5, 1066, and was buried in his own church.



FIG. 55.—Westminster Abbey. This picture shows how the Abbey Church, which Edward the Confessor built, looked to the people who made the Bayeux Tapestry.

If you want to know what that building looked like, you must look at a picture of it which was embroidered on linen some years after it was built. This picture is one of a long series of embroidered pictures which used to hang in a church at Bayeux in Normandy. They no longer hang in the church, but are still preserved at Bayeux. They tell us a great deal of the events in Edward's reign and his successor's. It used to be thought that Matilda, the wife of William of Normandy, had stitched them with her own needle and the help of her ladies, but nowadays we are not sure of this.

A part of Edward the Confessor's abbey is still standing at Westminster.



FIG. 56.—Sickness and Death of Edward the Confessor, as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry. The top part of the picture shows the king being held up in bed by his servants. In the lower part they are wrapping him up in his shroud and mourning over him.

After Edward's death, Harold, son of Godwine, was chosen to be king, for the English disliked the Normans.



FIG. 57.—The Funeral of Edward the Confessor, as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry.

But before the year was over William of Normandy had brought an army to England and defeated and killed



FIG. 58.—A Part of Westminster Abbey which was built by Edward the Confessor and is still standing.

Harold at the battle of Hastings. Then on Christmas Day, William was crowned king in the abbey church which Edward the Confessor had built. So England once more was ruled by a king who was not an Englishman. We must read in the next chapter how William conquered England, and what his Norman soldiers did.

CHAPTER XII. HOW WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR'S NORMANS TOOK POSSESSION OF THE ENGLISH VILLAGES

EDWARD the Confessor died in January, 1066. On Christmas Day in the same year William the Conqueror



FIG. 59.—Picture of Men looking at the Comet. Taken from the Bayeux Tapestry. The Latin words mean "They wonder at the Star."

was crowned king in Westminster Abbey. It had been a terrible year for Englishmen. From the very beginning of it they had feared that evil things were going to happen, and when a comet began to flame in the sky, early in the

summer, their fears were increased. To all Englishmen it seemed to foretell defeat. And defeat came upon them when Duke William landed at Pevensey, in Sussex, and advanced to Hastings. King Harold rushed to meet him, but he and many of his faithful Thanes were slain. The bravest of them gathered to make a last desperate fight round the English standards, and when they fell the days of English liberty were over for many a long year. On the very spot where Harold and his men made their last stand, the Norman conqueror built



FIG. 60.—Picture of the Battle of Hastings. King Harold is shown pulling an arrow from his eye. The Latin words mean "Harold the King is slain."

Battle Abbey to commemorate his victory. if you go there to-day, you will be shown the very place where Harold fell.

Then there came trouble for all men to bear, both great and small. As William marched slowly by a roundabout way to London, his men plundered the villages so terribly that it was many years before they recovered. His soldiers searched everywhere for food and all the things that an army needs. Villagers, flying in terror to the woods, saw their cattle driven off, their

stored corn and hay carted away, and their houses burnt. This was the way in which William hoped to terrify Englishmen into submission. He was successful. On Christmas Day, 1066, he was crowned king of the English by the Archbishop of York in Westminster Abbey.

Straightway he began to drive English nobles from their lands, for he said they had treacherously fought against their true king. And in their places he put Normans, who despised the English, and treated them cruelly. So in the year 1067, if you had been travelling about then, you would have seen parties of Normans riding through the country-side to take possession of the lands which William had given them in return for their help at Hastings. These men, of course, had Norman names, and if you look at a map of England to-day, you will see that some villages are still called by the names of the Norman lords, to whom William gave them. You will find Stoke d'Abernion in Surrey, Norton Mandeville in Essex, and Croome d'Abitot in Worcester, and many others. For a long time after the battle of Hastings no one who wished to be considered a gentleman spoke English; even little boys at school learnt their lessons in French, so that, when they grew up, they might be able to keep company with the rulers of the land, and pretend they were Normans.

Let us make believe we are in a village of Wessex when its new master rides into it. Our old English master, our Thane, is dead, for he went off with his soldiers when Harold called for his help against the foreigner, and fell beside his king on the day of the battle of Hastings. All through the winter the villagers

have starved, for they have had little corn and meat to live on, since William's army went past on its way to London. Their houses are in a ruinous condition, and the very barns have gone, for some of them were burnt, and others pulled down to supply fuel for Norman camp fires. The old mill wheel has not turned since the village was sacked, for even the dam, which supplied the water, was hacked to bits by the soldiers. So when the new master rides into the village, he sees lean starving



FIG. 61.—A Norman Horseman.

men, women and children. All around are fire-blackened ruins of English homes. Outside are some small patches of growing corn, for even in starvation time men must save some seed for next year's crop. But the fields are small compared with what they were.

How we hate this new comer ! How we should like to take vengeance on him and his men for all our suffering, and for all the fathers and brothers, who will never return from Hastings ! But we dare do nothing, and

say nothing. We can see that this man is no coward, for he rides into the middle of us, and looks all straight in the face. But we can scowl back, and scowl we do. Rising in his stirrups, he calls out in French, "I would have you know that King William has given me these lands, and that you are now my tenants. Do your part faithfully and I shall do mine. But if any man check me in my just rights, let him beware." No Englishmen understand a word, but they suspect his meaning well enough.

Off he rides to the Thane's house, and there he meets the widow and her daughter, attended by the steward. To the lady he explains that out of her husband's estate a small piece of land will be left to her. She knows that she will now be very poor for the rest of her days, but is too proud to ask for anything more, and withdraws in silence with her daughter.

The Norman then turns to the steward, and calls for his accounts. He hopes to see there carefully set out all the old Thane's rights ; how he received so much hay every year from one man, so much corn from another, and so much meat from a third ; and how Aelfgar, and men like him, work once a week for him all the year round, and do extra work in harvest ; and how Gurth and his equals do no work, but pay so much money. When the accounts are brought, he listens carefully as the steward explains each entry, for he wishes to know exactly how much the land, which the king has given him, is worth. The steward, of course, says that the value has gone down very much in the last year.

A talk follows till far on into the night, and many

questions are put by the master. How much land is there suitable for ploughing? How much of it did the old Thane keep for his own use? How many bushels of corn come from each acre? Do the villagers know how to manure and drain the land properly? Is there any grass land that could be made to grow extra supplies of corn? "For," says the lord, "my soldiers must have plenty to eat." "Yes," says the steward, "there is much land fit for the purpose. But do you propose to make the villagers work on this, and do their other work as well? Remember, Sir, that there are fewer of them than there were." To which the Norman replies that he intends his villagers to do not only this, but much more besides. Indeed he goes so far as to say that the men like Gurth, who never worked but only paid, shall now both work and pay. For more land must be cultivated somehow. And he adds that he intends to increase the amounts of meat, hay, eggs, cheese, butter and other things, which the villagers pay. So the steward goes home to bed in a thoughtful and unhappy state, for he sees hard times coming for his friends, and does not like telling them about the extra work that they will have to do.

The Norman also goes to bed, but not until he has gone round the house with his chief follower, and posted sentinels; for he has no wish to be murdered in his sleep by his new servants, as has happened to some of his friends. He and his followers do not think much of the old house. The old English Thaness did not make their houses strong for defence, for they had nothing to fear from their villagers. But the Norman says, "We must have a safer place than this to sleep in, or our

throats will all be cut some night." So the steward will hear of another piece of work for his friends in the village to do.

In the morning the Norman is up betimes and on horseback going round his land, and the steward goes with him



FIG. 62.—A Norman Tower. At first the Normans built towers of wood. Afterwards they built towers of stone, like this one.

and listens to his plans. He is told to have the mill dam repaired by next harvest, and a new wheel put in. The master next looks round for a position for a new house. He means to make it by throwing up a mound of earth, and building a wooden tower on top of it. Round the

whole there is to be a wall of earth and a ditch. He marks out the boundaries at once, and orders the steward to have the digging commenced.

Next he goes to the woods to look for timber, and, finding plenty suitable, he says, "Let me hear axes at work here when I come round to-morrow." As he rides home he sees the old village church. The roof lets the rain in, and some of the timber of which the building is made is rotting away. He indignantly says it is more like a broken-down stable than a house of God, and swears in the name of Saint Walery who sent the Normans a fair wind for their invasion, that, if he live long enough, he will build a stone church. For, like all Normans, he is a very religious man.

He has not been long back at the hall before Gurth and his friends ask to see him. When they are admitted to the hall, they say they have heard the word that is going round, how every villager, big and little, is to work on the new fields, which the lord is going to fence in, and is to pay more food than ever before. They say that this is against the custom of the village. "We paid food to the old Thaness, say they, because King Alfred so ordered our forefathers to do. But we never laboured like slaves on any man's land. We are free men, and when we have paid our dues, as King Alfred ordered, no man can ask us for more."

This bold speech has a terrible result. The new lord rises from his seat with such roaring rage and blazing eyes, that Gurth's party fear nothing less than death at the hands of the surrounding soldiers. "Custom!!" shouts the master, "Custom! you talk to me about custom as though it ruled all. I and my friends won

this land by the sword from you and traitors like you, who were in arms against your lawful king, William. Traitors lie at the mercy of their conquerors and must be punished for their treachery. Custom shall not protect you. Get you gone. Soldiers ! clear the hall."

For many days there is rage in the hearts of the illagers, for the smaller men like Aelfgar are ground to poverty by the new lord, and suffer even more than Gurth. Thus they feel the results of the Norman Conquest. All England feels them as well, and for five years to come there are angry rebellions in different parts of the land.

CHAPTER XIII. THE VILLAGE CHURCH AND ITS PRIEST IN NORMAN DAYS

THE Norman lord, about whom we read in the last chapter, never was able to build a stone church in his village. Perhaps he thought his villagers had enough to do in feeding him and his soldiers, in tilling the new fields, and building his new castle. After all no lord, however hard he was, wished to see his villagers so overworked, that they became weak and died ; for then he would get no work done at all. Perhaps, too, he had no time to attend to the necessary plans. Or perhaps he could get no architect to draw them, for there was a great deal of building going on, and all the best architects were very busy. Or perhaps he had too much fighting to do, for there were several rebellions against the Normans, and King William was always wanting his men to help him.

But the lord's son remembered his father's promise, and built a fair stone church in place of the old wooden one. You can always tell a Norman church, for the archways of its doors and windows are round, not pointed. In many a village to-day you can still see one ; perhaps there is one near your home. Of course accidents happen to churches as to other buildings ; sometimes they are burnt, or fall down, or are destroyed in time of war.

Often, however, the tower and its big door remain. The tower was always built very strongly with very thick walls, for when a village was attacked it was the custom of the villagers to fly to the church tower for refuge, and carry all their valuable property into it. So even if the church was burnt down, or decayed from old

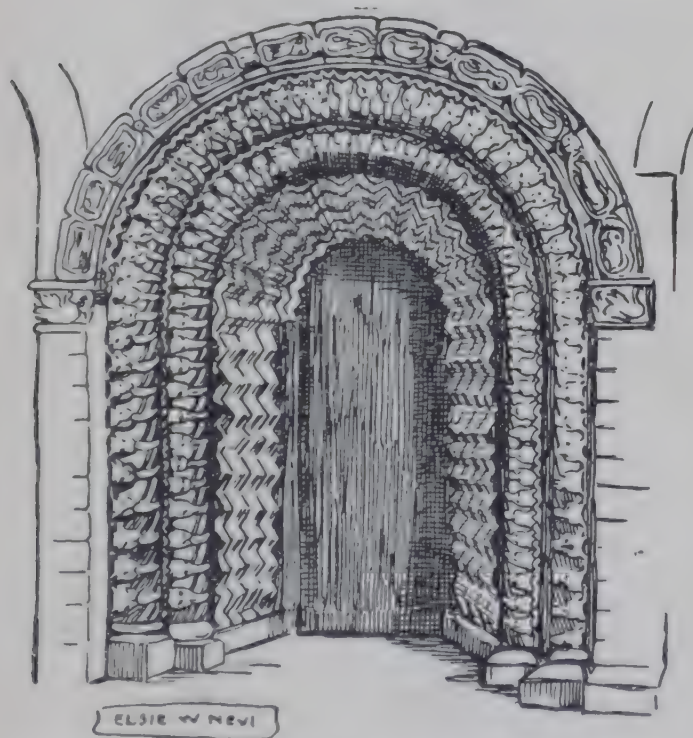


FIG. 63.—The Doorway of a Norman Church.

age, the tower often survived. And when a new church was built, the builders made the old tower do. So even if your church is much later than the Norman times, you may find somewhere about it a round-topped Norman window or door. Go and have a look at it some day.

The Normans were very religious people. They thought a great deal about Heaven, and earnestly sought out the means of getting there. They thought it very

necessary to go to church often, and to attend the service which we call the Eucharist, or Holy Communion. And as that service took place in church, they built many churches, some little ones for the villages, and some very big ones which we call cathedrals. And because they thought God really dwelt in these churches, they built them as well and as beautifully as they knew how. That is why visitors in a village to-day always ask to see the church, and why architects, who build our churches now, always train themselves for their work by studying, measuring and drawing the old ones.

But the Normans knew well that going to church often was not enough to help a man to get to Heaven. He must lead a good life outside the church as well, and it is the business of the priest to show him what a good life is, and compel him by punishments to lead it. When the Norman conquerors of England looked about them, they saw few priests who knew clearly what a good life was, and fewer still who lived good lives themselves, and punished sinners. The English priests, instead of raising their people to a higher life, allowed their people to corrupt them. Few of them could understand Latin, in which the Bible and other useful religious books were written. Even the Latin service, which they read on Sundays, was not understood by them, so that they could not explain it to the people.

Many of them did not lead good lives. Even in the bishops' houses the English priests got shamefully drunk, so you can imagine whether the priest, living in a little village among ignorant peasant folk, drank much or little. How could a priest who was not careful about his life give a good example to his people ?

There was another thing about English priests which the Normans thought was wrong. Many of them were married. Now a man, who has a family of boys and girls, does not like to offend anybody if he can help it. He wants his children to have plenty of friends, so that they may have helpers when they grow up. So a married priest did not like to punish, or even reprove any one for sins, lest he should take revenge by harming his children. In this way the wickedness of a village was not always checked by the priest, as it should have been.

And even if a priest did try to punish a man for not going to church, or for behaving badly there, or for not having his children baptised, or for not sending them to church, it was very difficult to do so. For it was the custom in those days not to punish any man until all the people in the court had decided whether he was guilty and worthy of punishment. Nowadays, of course, it is a jury that decides in important cases whether a man is guilty, and then the judge says what his punishment is to be. But in the days we are reading about, when the priest thought a man should have been punished, the people in the court very often did not agree, and so the man got off. This happened because his friends in the court did not think as the priest did, or thought the sin, of which he was accused, was too little a matter to punish any one for. So in this way wickedness went unchecked.

Another thing that the Normans did not like was that very often an English priest had several churches to look after. When this was the case, service could not be read every Sunday and on each Saint's Day in each of his churches, as it should have been.

But the Normans worked hard to change all this. They had good schools in their monasteries, in which good priests were educated, who knew how to read the helpful books that were written in Latin. And they always made them promise that they would not get married, but give all their best efforts to improving the lives of the men and women in their parish. They tried to have services held in each church every Sunday and every Saint's Day, and no priest was supposed to have more than one church. And when the priest wanted to punish any one for sin, he could have this done in a special court of clergymen where ordinary people had no power to prevent the man being punished as was thought fit. And you may be sure that he asked for a very severe punishment, if he had no family to make him frightened of any man. If he were a good priest he cared not a rap what happened to himself, if only he could make his villagers behave as Christians should. If small punishments were of no use, such as fines, penances and fastings, the sinner was forbidden to come to church and was not allowed to come to Holy Communion or Eucharist. So, in terror lest he should die in his sins, and the gates of Heaven be locked against him, he soon came humbly and begged forgiveness.

So in all these ways the Church slowly became a better Church, and English priests became better men, and tried to make villagers lead better lives. But, after all the Church has done, it has still much work to do to-day, and the people who think we could get on without a church at all are very few indeed.

The priest had a house near the church. At first it was built of wood like the other houses, but in time a stone

one was built. In it he had furniture, such as rough tables, benches, a chair or two, knives for eating, some chests and cupboards, a pothook for hanging pots over the fire, wooden bowls and plates for food, a basin for washing his hands in, and probably a book or two. If he were well off, he could entertain travellers. In those days, when robbers were many, and there were few inns where innkeepers were honest, men were glad to lodge with a priest. The priest also had to give bread to the poor, when times were bad. So he needed a bedroom for the guest and a good kitchen, in which to bake, and storehouses to hold food.

And he needed lands of his own to supply the food. So like the other villagers he had pieces of ground in the big fields, and grew corn on them. And his cattle and sheep pastured on the grassy lands outside the village under the care of the oxherd and shepherd. But in addition to all this he received tithes from the villagers. Tithe means tenth: every villager was supposed to pay the priest a tenth of his corn and hens and lambs and calves and other things. It was usual, too, to pay him when he christened babies, or buried the dead, or married men and women.

So very often the priest was a rich man. Sometimes he was cruel too, and took tithes and money from men who could not afford to pay. And even in Norman times there were lazy and ignorant priests, for the bishops could not look after every one of them. So although matters were better than before the Conquest, they were by no means perfect.

CHAPTER XIV. THE FORESTS IN NORMAN TIMES

THE Norman kings and those who came after them were mighty hunters. Every one knows how William the Conqueror made himself a great hunting-ground, about twenty miles long and twenty miles broad, near his town of Winchester. It was a new hunting-ground in his day, and so it was called the New Forest, and it has kept that name until now. It has belonged to the kings of England from William the Conqueror's time until George the Fifth's, and if you go there now you can see notices put up by the king's servants. Henry the Second, the great grandson of the Conqueror, had sixty-nine forests.

You must not suppose that the word "forest" means merely a place covered by great trees. If you walk through the New Forest, of course you see many large oaks and beeches in places. But a great part of the forest is simply brushwood, for it has many bushes mixed up with little trees. And there are in lots of places open pieces of grassy ground, where the forest ponies and deer can get pasture. Occasionally you come across fields and even villages. It was something like this as far back as William the Conqueror's time.

All royal forests were very carefully guarded, so that the kings might have good hunting. Men might not slay the deer or the wild boars, and sometimes not even the hares without permission. Nor might the trees or shrubs be cut down without special leave, for they supplied food like acorns and beech nuts for the boars



FIG. 64.—A Scene in the New Forest.

to live on, and the shrubs were a warm covering for them at night against the cold winds. The wild boar was long ago disappeared from England, but in Norman times you might have seen him slinking out of sight in the tangled copses of briar and thorn, unless you angered him, when of course he would charge you with an angry rush, and try to cut you up with his cruel curving tusks, that grew out of his lower jaws. And there were

pheasants with gorgeous plumage, flying from tree to tree, and partridges with duller feathers scuttling in the grass with their young ones, when a passer-by disturbed them; and woodcocks and bobtailed rabbits, and

badgers, foxes, wolves and otters. They all loved the cover of the trees and shrubs, so no one might cut down or burn timber, unless he had leave. Woe betide the wretch who was found by the royal foresters carting

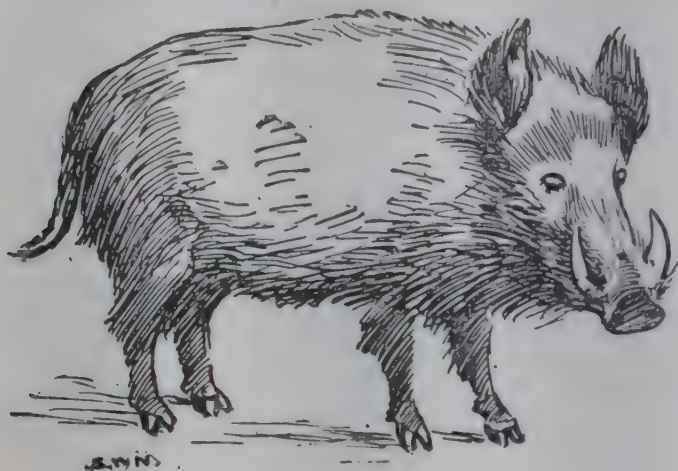


FIG. 65.—A Wild Boar.

wood out of the forest without permission. He would have to pay the value of the trees, say one shilling for each oak or beech, or even more, if the trees were bigger than usual, and pay a fine of a shilling as well. Of course the monks and nuns from near by, and the villagers and nobles, needed firewood and timber for barns, churches and houses, and to them the king gave leave to cut what was necessary. But the keepers watched to see that no more was taken.

To-day, big landowners dislike to see people walking over their estates; they say that it disturbs the game, and gamekeepers are sure to turn you off if they catch you. The kings of olden time were as particular, especially when the young deer were being born about midsummer time. To prevent them being disturbed, gamekeepers of Cranborne Chase used to make carters pay

fourpence for every cart they took through. In other forests, the gamekeepers made people pay all the year round. So few carts and horses went through the woods about midsummer.

All sheep and domesticated cattle, that pastured in the forest glades, were taxed by the keepers. One penny was paid on each pig, and one halfpenny on each little pig, to pay for the acorns and beech nuts which they ate. Sheep were fined one penny and oxen threepence. Each animal, that had a right to feed in the forest, was branded with a mark. Animals found without a mark were seized for the king. No goats were allowed to enter forests, for deer hate the smell of them, and will not feed where they have been. So kings got money as well as pleasure out of their woods.

In each forest it was the business of gamekeepers to maintain a watchful eye on all men that they saw with



FIG. 66.—A Hunter shoots a Man by Accident.

greyhounds, or with bows and arrows. Have you ever seen a gamekeeper to-day looking at a village loafer, who is pretending to give his dog a walk, but is really after rabbits? The gamekeepers of Norman times put on the same look when men passed them with dogs. There was a cruel rule devised to prevent dogs from chasing

game. Every dog who lived in a forest had three of his claws on each front paw pulled out, so that he might not be able to run quickly. And just as gamekeepers nowadays can be seen peeping through hedges at suspicious characters, whom they take for salmon poachers, so in the old times they slunk about the woods, to spy on men with bows and arrows. For there were in those days, as there are to-day, men who were bold enough to say that wild animals belong to the first man who can catch them. So often there were fierce little skirmishes in the dark between keepers and poachers, with hot pursuits and captures.

When game thieves were caught, in William the Conqueror's time, they were condemned to lose an eye or have a hand chopped off. William was so fond of hunting that people said that he loved the beasts of the chase as if they were his children. His son, William the Second, actually put poachers to death, but in later reigns it was usual to fine a man or, if he could not pay the fine, put him in prison for a year and a day.

If a deer were found lying dead in the forest, as much fuss was made as if it had been a dead man. Men had to come from the neighbouring villages to hold an inquest on the body, in order to learn the cause of death. If disease or old age were the cause, trouble was at an end; but if an arrow were found in the carcase, the villages were sure to be fined, unless they could prove that some particular man or men were the killers. In that case the men were fined or imprisoned by the king's judges.

As the visitor tramps through the New Forest to-day, any one he meets will tell him where the "Rufus Stone" stands. It marks the place where William Rufus, the Conqueror's son, was slain with an arrow. No one knows who shot him. On August 2, 1100 A.D., he went

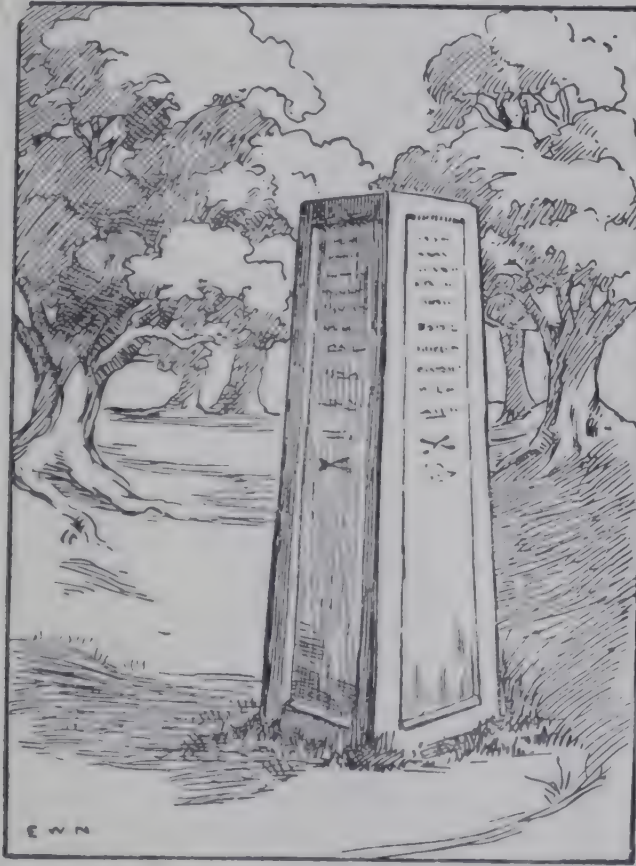


FIG. 67.—The Rufus Stone.

out, as his custom was, to hunt the deer. As he hunted he was separated from his friends, and death came upon him while his ears were filled with the barking of dogs, the winding of horns and other sounds of the chase. No one of his hunting companions loved him sufficiently to stay by his body. It was the rough peasants of the Forest who covered it with coarse cloths, and put it on a

cart, which jolted it to Winchester for burial. William had dealt roughly with all men, and more cruelly with the people of the Forest than with any others, and yet it was the poor people of the Forest who alone showed him any kindness at the end.

CHAPTER XV. LIFE IN A MONASTERY

ALMOST every one in the Middle Ages lived within sound of the bells of a monastery or a nunnery. A monastery was a collection of many buildings, in which lived men called monks. It was the business of monks to spend their lives in continually making prayer and praise to God. In a nunnery, a building like a monastery, lived women called nuns, who did the same thing. When the bells rang louder and longer than usual, then the whole country-side or town, in which the monastery or nunnery stood, knew it was a Saint's Day, and that the monks or nuns would remain longer than usual in their churches. People looking at a monastery always noticed first the lofty tower that carried the bells, and, a little lower, the high, lead-covered roof of the church. Lying below were the dormitories, where the inmates slept, the dining-hall or refectory, where they ate their meals, the hospital for the sick, and many other buildings and store-houses. And round them all was a high wall with only one entrance, a great wide archway, like those which can still be seen at Saint Alban's, or Battle Abbey and other places.

The scene at the gate was always a busy one. Here you could see servants of the monastery driving in great loads of corn, meat or cheese from the farms owned by the monks, or a poor man coming to beg for bread or a



FIG. 68.—Norwich Cathedral and Cloisters.

night's lodging, or merchants who had wine or cloth to sell, or a husband asking that some one might come and speak comforting words to his wife who was ill, or give her medicine to make her well. Here you might see a man riding as fast as a weary horse could carry him, to escape enemies who are upon his track, and to win the safety



FIG. 69.—Gateway of an Abbey.

which a monastery can give. If you were lucky, you might see the stately abbot, the ruler of the monastery, ride out with all his servants, to go upon the business of the monastery, or perhaps to go to London to help the king in the work of governing the realm. Every one would stand aside to let him pass, for he was treated with great respect. The porter at the gate was kept

busy ; he wanted to know every man's business before he granted admission.

* * * * *

Let us pretend we have a friend among the monks, who is willing to show us round the monastery. We get through the gates without any opposition from the porter, and at once go off to the church, which is the most important building. As we enter by the great west door, we perceive that everything possible has been done to beautify it. The monks and nuns of old loved to paint pictures on the walls, frescoes we call them, and to put stained glass into the windows. At the sides are many pillars stretching up to support a lofty roof, and as we look between them and straight before us, we can see a great wooden screen with a carved



FIG. 70.—Abbot on Horseback.

image of Christ rising above it. Ordinary people are not allowed to pass this, but our friend takes us in. In front of us at the eastern end we can see the high altar with candles burning upon it. As we continue our walk towards it, we pass the transepts, one on each side of us, and come to the entrance of the chancel. Here we have pointed out to us the places where the monks sit at service time. Their seats rise in tiers one behind the other on each side of the chancel, like the seats of choristers in some churches to-day. Just inside the entrance to the chancel, on the right, sits the abbot,

where he can see everybody. When we approach the altar we can see it has very rich cloths upon it, and

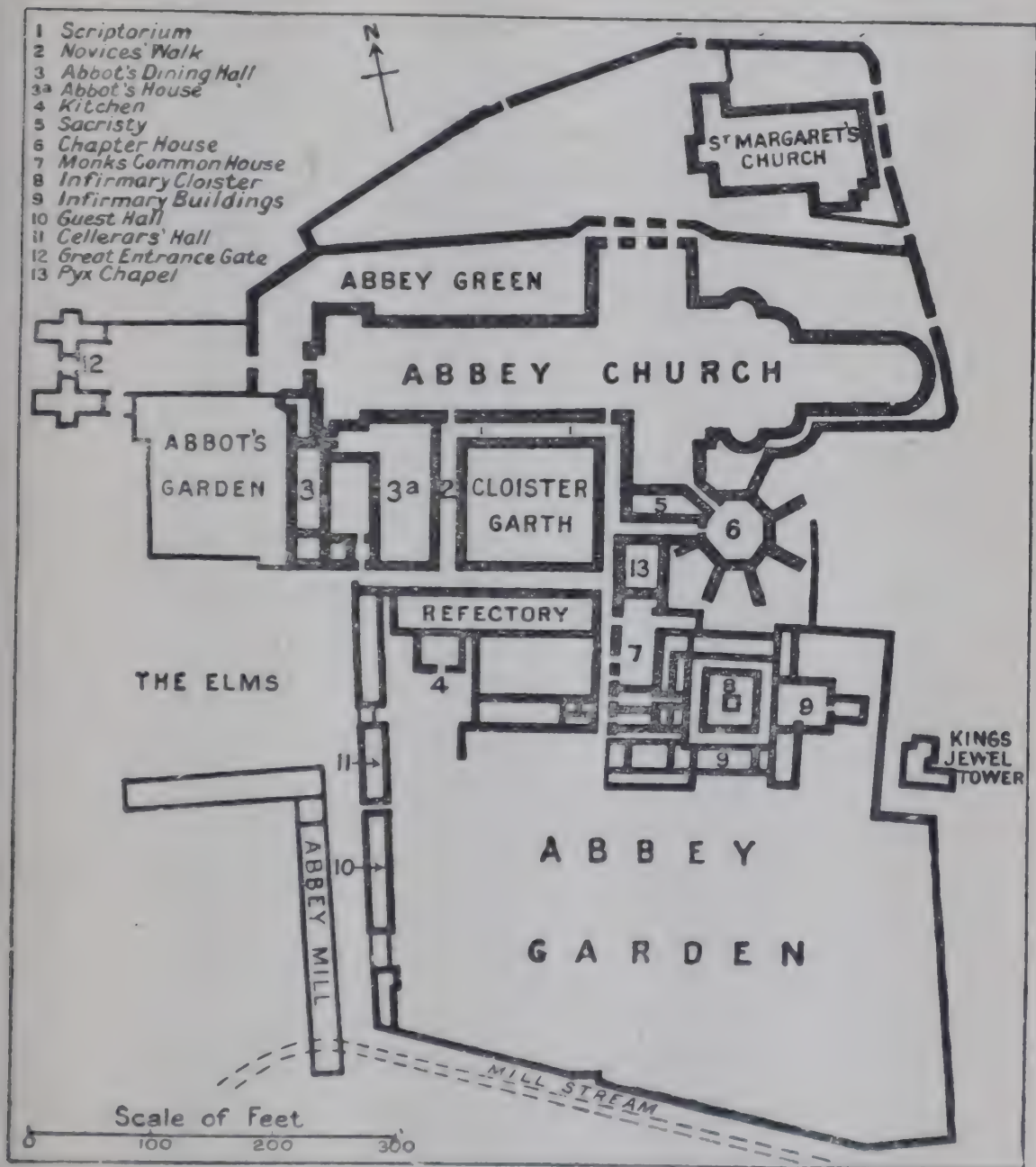


FIG. 71.—Plan of Westminster Monastery.

gold cups and great candlesticks with candles always alight.

In the chancel at night and day services, in cold and

frosty weather alike, sit the monks. Feet with nothing on them but sandals would get very cold at night, so they are allowed to wear thick, warm boots lined with fur. Cold fingers can be thrust up the wide sleeves to be warmed, and cowls can be well pulled over head and ears to keep off the draughts that every one feels in winter.

Our guide then takes us out by a door on the south



FIG. 72.—Monks singing in Church.

side of the church into a court or quadrangle. In the centre is a square patch of grass, and running round the edges are covered passages, called cloisters. You can see cloisters in many places to-day, for example, at Westminster Abbey, where there was once a monastery, and at Norwich. As we walk along the north cloister the sun comes in, shining through open arches ; if we look through these we can see the grass outside. Our guide explains that the great building of the church keeps off the cold so



FIG. 73.—Monk in a Cloister.

well, that with the aid of the sunshine, the monks can sit in the north cloister and work even on most days of winter. We see the monks at their tasks as we walk through. As we come from the church into the cloister, we see the abbot in his seat, and respectfully bow to him, as he

supervises the studious monks in their copying or reading of old manuscripts. In the eastern cloister we find the novices or young men, who are learning to be monks, hard at work under the novice-master. How quietly he walks up and down behind them as they bend over their work ! On the opposite side are more young monks at work. In the south cloister nothing is going on, for the sun never reaches it to warm it. It leads, however, into the dining-hall or refectory.



FIG. 74.—Monk copying.

The refectory is a long hall, having several tables running lengthways, and one table, somewhat raised above the rest, running across. The abbot sits at this high table. The floor is strewn with rushes. The tables are set for dinner with spoon, knife, cup, napkin, and bread for every monk. When the dinner-bell rings, the monks pour into the refectory, pausing at the lavatory to wash their hands. When all are ready the abbot enters, bows from his place at the high table to left and

right, says grace, and orders the meal to be served. During dinner a monk in a pulpit reads aloud from the Bible or some good book. All are expected to show good manners, and not to clean their cups with their fingers, nor wipe their hands or mouths with the table-cloth. Crumbs are not to be dropped on the floor; table-cloths are to be kept clean. At the end of dinner the monks fold their napkins, and, all standing up, sing grace after meat. Then they wash their hands again, for this is very necessary when forks are not known.

The next apartment we see is the dormitory where monks sleep. It is a long room with beds in it, and is near the church, so that in the night-time the monks may easily reach the services. In some monasteries the dormitory is divided up into little bedrooms, in others not.

The kitchen of a monastery is a very busy place. Either meals are being prepared in huge pots over great fires, or else pots, pans, knives, and ladles are being scoured till they shine. The cooks have special sleeves to keep their clothes clean, and gloves for moving hot dishes. They have to wipe the dishes before they are sent to the refectory, and if they are late with dinner they get into trouble. Close by the kitchen is the larder full of eggs, beef, bacon, cheese, fowls, eels, herrings, and other fish. The kitchen is always a long way from the church, so that no smell of cooking may enter there.

The part of the building which is best known to the ordinary people is the almonry, where a monk called the almoner gives alms to the poor. "Alms" is a word which means bread, meat, clothes, money, and anything else which poor people need. The almoner is often told by his abbot not to be mean when poor people beg for

food and drink, but to be even more generous than he can afford.

The life of a monk is carefully regulated. Every day he goes to church about seven or eight times. At midnight his day's work begins. A bell rouses him from his sleep to put on his clothes and his night boots, and enter the cold church, for the service called Matins. At two o'clock he goes back to bed until seven, when he rises for the day. From seven till about eleven his morning is filled with services, allowing an interval about eight o'clock for a very light breakfast. At eleven he has dinner, and from midday till five or six he works at copying manuscripts, or studies good books, or practises singing, or digs or weeds in the garden and fields. If he is a young man or a novice he is allowed to play games, so long as they are not too violent. If he is high in office he uses his afternoons to add up his accounts, or inspect the food supplies, or examine the buildings to see if any repairs are necessary. Or if there is nothing else to do, he enjoys a talk with his friends. At five or six there comes evening worship called Vespers, then supper, followed by another service called Compline. And then, by half-past seven in winter or half-past eight in summer, all the busy day is over and all the monks are in bed.

CHAPTER XVI. HOW A MONASTERY GOT ITS FOOD AND MONEY

AFTER going over the buildings of the monastery we began to ask questions of our guide. "Where does all the food come from, that we saw on carts entering the monastery gate? Where do you get the money to pay all your servants, and feed the poor who beg for help? Where does your firewood come from, and your cheese, butter, eggs, milk, flour, poultry, and other things?" "Ah," said he, laughing, "I must introduce you to our seneschal, who knows all about these things. But you cannot see all you want to-day. If you will sleep in our guest rooms to-night, you can go out with him on his rounds to-morrow." We accepted the invitation, and were hospitably entertained. Next day we were handed over to the seneschal, who was as kind to us as our guide of the previous day.

The first thing we saw in the morning was the villagers, coming to the monastery to get their orders for the day. The labourers worked about the lands and buildings every day, and received wages, but the villeins only worked three or four days a week for the monks, and spent the other days in tilling the lands which the monks allowed them to hold in return. Besides giving labour, the

villeins had to supply corn and other things from their own lands as well, so they had rather a hard life. Up they all came at dawn. Some were sent to cut down hay, some to mend hedges, some to work in the barns and dairies, some to thatch roofs. One was sent to help the smith, another was given a message for a distant monastery. One, who appeared late, was warned to be careful. Two others had not supplied the proper quantity of rabbit skins, as was their duty. Unless there was enough fur to line the night boots, some monks would have cold feet in church next winter. Some women came too. Golliva brought her rake to help in the hay-making, and Alice had a water-pot in which she carried water for the reapers to drink, and a whetstone, with which she sharpened their sickles.

When all had been set to work, the seneschal took us to the stables to see the many horses. Some were cart-horses and others riding horses. The abbot's visitors sometimes expect to have horses supplied, so that they may go hunting. The abbot occasionally goes with them, not to hunt, but to look on. We saw the kennels where the hunting hounds are kept, and the falconry where the hawks are. We visited the cowhouses and the dairies where butter and cheese are made. We never saw such a lot of cheese at once before. Then there were innumerable barns for corn and hay. And lastly we inspected the mill on the banks of the stream, talked to the dusty miller, looked at the water-wheel, watched carts being loaded with flour for next day's bread, and saw men catching eels in the mill pond for the monks to eat at next day's dinner in the refectory.

The seneschal then proposed a walk to the village

near by, where many of the villeins and labourers live. When we expressed our willingness to go, he looped his long gown over his arm so that he could stride along easily, and, putting a huge dock-leaf under his hood, for it was a broiling day, he started off on his long legs through the hayfields, talking fast all the time. He never failed, however, to return the respectful salutations of the passers-by. "You seem to have many friends," we said. "Well, I suppose I have," he returned. "You see, I have fed many of them in the late hard winter, and doctored others, and christened babies, and married the young men and women; and sometimes I walk into our little school in the monastery, and try my hand at teaching the better-class boys."

Apparently the man who was seneschal before him was not so popular, for he was a hard man and beat down the poor peasants. Once he tried to raise from them a greater number of eels than they were bound by custom to supply to the monastery, and went down to the village to talk angrily to the men, who had not sent in the number he demanded. When they said they

could not possibly find any more in the water, he refused to listen, till at last both men and women turned on him and drove him with blows out of the village, all the



FIG. 75.—Two Men beating a Seneschal.

way to the monastery gates. But the new seneschal and the villagers are good friends, and he can walk round the village and collect payments without any trouble.

The village looked very tumble-down and dirty. Manure heaps lay piled even against the walls of the huts. No wonder the monks have a lot of doctoring to do. The houses were almost deserted, for men, women, and children were hard at work, either on the monks' lands, or on their own. As we passed the doors, the seneschal

told us about the inmates. "The owner of that hut has to catch us thirty salmon every year, and the tail of every one of them has to be as thick as my wrist. The son of the man next door is such a clever boy that we have taken him into the monastery school; he sings in the church services, and carries a censer. The hut opposite belongs to the alewife. She pays us sixpence every year out of her profits, but the villagers say she brews bad ale.



FIG. 76.—A Payment or Due of Fish.

She is old and lonely, for she lost her husband and sons in a plague. So, although we do not like her, we try to treat her gently. The man in the hut beside her collects firewood for us. At Christmas-time and festivals he supplies the great Yule logs. At other times he helps to drive the sheep. Last year in the cold weather, when the lambs needed watching, I found him sitting drinking in the ale-house, instead of watching in the fold. I warned him well. He will not forget it."

After dinner in the guests' dining-chamber the

seneschal found us horses, and off we rode through the woods and commons to a village some miles away. We passed the villagers' pigs, which were being watched in the woods by the swine herd. We saw the goose-girl with her geese, the shepherd and his sheep, the rabbit-catchers at their work. It is the seneschal's business to keep an eye on all of them. The woods are valuable, so



FIG. 77.—House of a Parish Priest.

no man may fell trees without permission, and sometimes payment as well. Men were cutting timber for the mill dam. At last we reached a village where the monks own the church. The priest, whom they pay to work there, hurried out to welcome us. He and the seneschal talked about business for some time. The seneschal asked,

“ Are the tithes coming in properly ? Have you had the church roof mended ? How many burials and marriages and christenings have you had since I was here last ? Have you collected the fees for these ? How are the crops doing on your lands ? ” These questions were asked because all the money and corn got in this way go to the monastery. The priest, on his part, asked questions too. “ Can I have a new bell to call the people to church ? Can I have a new barn ? The roof of my vicarage needs repairing too.” The seneschal promised to consider these things. The church was in the Norman style. Inside were tombs of knights ; above them lay carved images of them and their wives. Some of them had been crusaders and had fought against the heathen in Palestine. Their old armour, dented by many a blow, could be seen hanging above their tombs.

At last the day was done. When we dismounted at the monastery gate, and bade farewell to our friends, we felt that we knew something more about a monastery than we did before. We felt that the abbot was like a Norman lord, for he received the same payments in food and labour from his villagers. And the seneschal was like the lord's steward.

CHAPTER XVII. THE FRIARS

HERE, tramping sturdily along the road comes a happy looking man. His face seems kind, as though he spent his days in helping others, laughing with them when they are gay, and mourning with them when they are sad. His feet are bare; his grey clothes look old and are bleached by sun and rain. He is dressed something like a monk, in a long gown with a tippet to it, and round his waist he has a knotted rope with a crucifix hanging from one end.

This man is a Friar, whose work it is to serve God by helping men. One day he knelt before the altar of a church and promised God to give all his wealth away, and

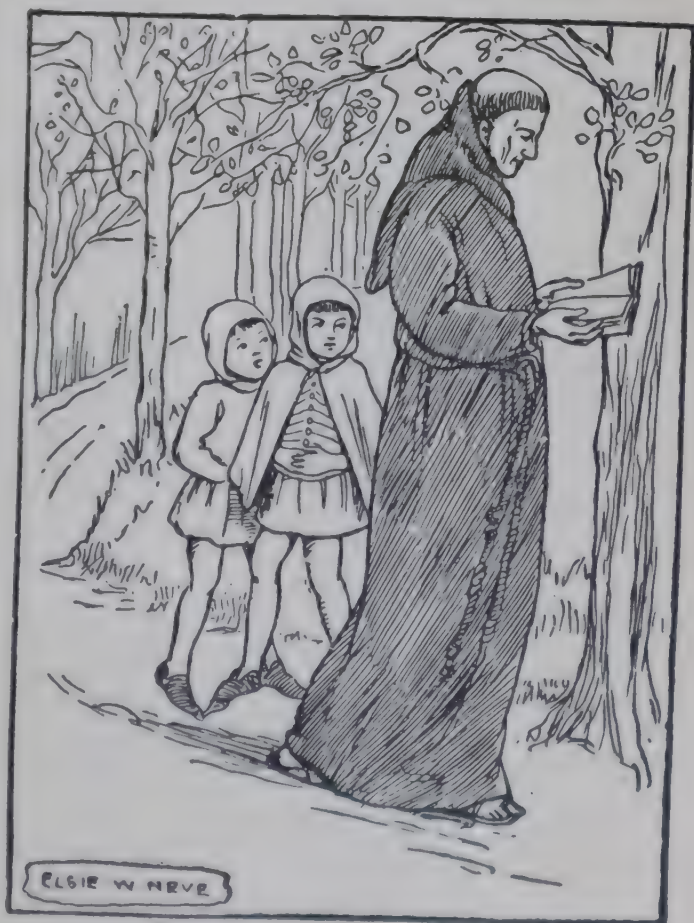


FIG. 78.—A Friar.

to be like the apostles, to whom Christ said, "Do not possess gold nor silver, nor money in your purse, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats nor shoes nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his meat." So, like the apostles, he preaches the Gospel wherever he goes; he begs his food by the roadside, and sleeps where he can. He is sometimes called a Franciscan Friar, because the first man to live and work and clothe himself in this way was St. Francis.

If he likes peasants' food he will surely get as much as he wants, for every man and woman and child he meets smiles to see him. And well they may. Their priest is not so good to them as he should be, for he is idle. There are people in the village who wish to confess their sins, and receive forgiveness; there are aged and sick to be comforted, men and women to be married, and babies to be baptised; and every one wants to hear about Jesus Christ and God, so the friar will have plenty to do.

He begins to go from hut to hut, to hear the confessions of the old and young, and assure them of God's forgiveness. If they are happy he laughs and jokes with them; if they are in trouble he comforts them, for he remembers Christ's command to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep." And he preaches on the village green, taking his stand on the steps of the stone cross. No Latin for him. He speaks to the people in a language they understand, about Christ and the Cross, Heaven and Hell. In the day-time he lends a helping hand in the fields where the villagers work, and when eating time comes, and the labourers sit down among the hay or corn, they willingly give him a share of their coarse rye bread, tough cheese,

and some beer. At night he thinks himself lucky if he finds a hay loft to sleep in. Many a time he has slept in cold church porches.

How willing he is to help ! One wife complains that the wicked fairies go into her dairy and spoil her cream and butter ; or that something has gone wrong with her cows and their calves. Off goes the friar to the dairy or the cowhouse to offer up a prayer there that will keep the fairies away. If he meets a hungry man upon the road, he gives him all the food he has, without thought for himself. He goes even into lazar houses, where lepers live, whom no one will go near, and comforts them in their loathsome suffering. Well is he called " friar," for that means " brother," and this man is a brother to every one.

To-morrow he may be invited to have dinner with a bishop or an archbishop. If he is, then he will go in his bare feet, and his old clothes, and be as happy there as in a peasant's hut. Even if there were snow on the ground, and his feet bled with the cold, nevertheless he would still go barefooted, and be cheerful about it.

* * * * *

It was in the year 1224 that the friars first came to England. When they landed at Dover, a nobleman of whom they begged food, thought they were vagrants and imprisoned them. At another place the porter of a monastery drove them away from the gates, because he took them for actors and not for God's servants. But the poor soon learned to know them. The first comers lived in the slums of the cities they visited. In London they built themselves a house in Stinking Lane. In Oxford they settled in the swampy undrained part of

the town, where the poor and outcast lived. In Cambridge they took up their lodging at first in an old Jewish church near the gaol. It is said that the friars at Oxford did not even use pillows at first, nor sandals, unless they were ill or weak.

Soon the people began to love them. They did not live far away inside monasteries. They were better educated than the priests, who could only mumble Latin, which they did not understand. The friars could answer questions, and explain what God desired His true believers to do. So the people built them churches. Small and mean the buildings were at first, and the furniture within was not costly, as in a monastic church; even the cups for the Communion were of base metal—not of gold or silver. Thither came the common people in crowds, to listen to the English preaching, to confess their sins, and to promise to lead better lives.

The numbers of the friars increased: their dwellings became larger; the people gave them money as they travelled the country, and this they spent not on themselves, but on the poor, and on buildings and books. In their houses, which they called Fratries, they studied hard: every good book that was published was bought by them, and their libraries became large. Learned scholars arose amongst them, and soon they became professors at the Universities, and lectured to large classes. They painted lovely pictures, and wrote great books, and helped to make Oxford into the great University that it is to-day.

Sad to relate, as years went on, the friars fell away from their first goodness, till people began to hate them as much as once they had loved them. Love of money

ruined them. They began to clothe themselves richly, wear buckled shoes, and live well. Soon they did more harm than good in the villages they entered, for they began to forgive sins in return for money. So the rich man was encouraged to commit sin. But we should remember what kindness they showed at first, and how they taught Englishmen about God and Christ in the days when priests were ignorant.

CHAPTER XVIII. A MEDIÆVAL TOWN IN THE TIME OF EDWARD III. 1327-1377

LONG ago towns had walls round them. As you walked round a town you came every hundred yards or so to towers which stood out from the walls, and rose high above them, so that no enemy could come up to the wall to pull it down without being shot at from loopholes in the towers. On each side of the gates were towers higher and stronger than usual. The arch of the gate had a portcullis in it, and, if there was a moat round the town, a drawbridge also. From a long way off it was possible to see the church towers rising high above the red-tiled roofs of the houses. Round about the walls were the meadows where cattle pastured, and where the citizens, on holidays, ran races, held sports, or walked more soberly about. If the great bell in the church tower were suddenly to ring loudly and quickly in times of danger, you would have seen them all give up sporting and walking, and hurriedly re-enter the city, lest the shutting of gates, dropping of portcullis and raising of drawbridge, might leave them on the wrong side of the wall.

On busy days the roads leading to the gates were crowded. You might have seen a knight in armour riding to war with his squires behind him ; or perhaps a jolly band of young men or women going out with hawks

on fist to chase the herons, that flew with their long legs behind them up and down the river. On market day farmers came, carrying cheese, butter, eggs, and other things to sell to the citizens. Some of them carried their wives on pillions behind them. Here and there was a



FIG. 79.—Ladies fowling.

merchant with his goods on the back of pack-horses. He carried his goods in this way partly because the roads were too full of holes and mud for carts to travel, and partly because he often wanted to go where there were no roads at all. They all got out of the way of the hunting party. It is not pleasant to be rolled into the mud, or have all one's eggs cracked.

Let us enter the gates with the crowd. Don't get tripped up by any farmer's young porkers, or get caught between two pack-horses. There stands the toll collector. He lets in no one carrying goods or driving cattle, unless they pay money. He has caught that woman who was

trying to slip past with a crate of live hens on her head. The town makes farmers pay duty on everything they

bring in for sale. Now we can see the streets and shops. The shops are places where people make things as well as sell them. They have no glass windows; everything is open to the street; across the front of the shop runs the counter, with articles exposed for sale on it. Behind it stands the shopkeeper or his boy. Every one seems to think we want to buy, and shouts without stopping, "What do ye lack?"



FIG. 80.—Country people bringing Pigs and Cattle and other Food to Town. One man is paying toll to the collector. The nearest horse has packs slung across its back.

Look at this goldsmith that has a customer in his shop. The customer's servant is holding some jugs his master has bought, and listening to an argument about the price of a jug and basin. The shopkeeper evidently thinks he will get his price, for he is all smiles. His clerk is making notes in a book. On the counter are gold or silver vessels, and on the wall hang a sword in its scabbard, a cup, an ornamented strap, a bag and a mirror, perhaps of polished silver. I wonder if the customer is an alderman. He must

be rich enough. I am sure his wife would like him to be one.



FIG. 81.—Goldsmith's Shop.

What a din those apprentices make in the other shops ! Here are men who make bows (bowyers), and arrows (fletchers), and gloves (glovers). We still have surnames like these. And there are butchers, fullers, tanners, saddlers, horners (who make horn cups), bakers, mercers, and lots of others.

Look out ! Here's a drove of young cattle. Ah ! They have knocked over the old apple woman who was watching her apple basket at the corner of the street. Sometimes plays are given in the town. The citizens are very fond of seeing scenes from the Bible acted. They have a play called the "Raising of Lazarus" and another called "The Star," in which the three wise men are shown, visiting the cradle of the infant Jesus, and very many more. Some of the plays show Christ triumphing over evil spirits. Men dressed up

as demons with tails and horns come on to the stage, and caper about with scowling faces till a man, representing Christ, appears and drives them far away.

Here's a carpenter's shop. The master says his big axe cost 5*d.*, his little one 3*d.*, his adze 2*d.*, and his square 1*d.* Listen to this priest telling the old pedlar that if he catches him selling his handkerchiefs, needles, thread, and ribbons in the church porch on Sundays again there will be trouble. The old fellow says in defence that he was in church during service, and only sold his goods after people began to come out, and if he doesn't sell there he will lose custom.

Hullo! here's a man who has been using false weights.



FIG. 82.—In the Stocks.

The officer is putting his feet in the stocks. The stocks are a framework of wood through which a man's feet are thrust, so that he cannot move them. When the boys come out, they will pelt the unhappy wretch with bad eggs, rotten apples, and even stones and mud.

Some of the houses are built of stone and timber



FIG. 83.—Clothes in the 14th Century.

mixed, just like old houses in some of our villages. Sometimes the ground floor wall is strongly made of

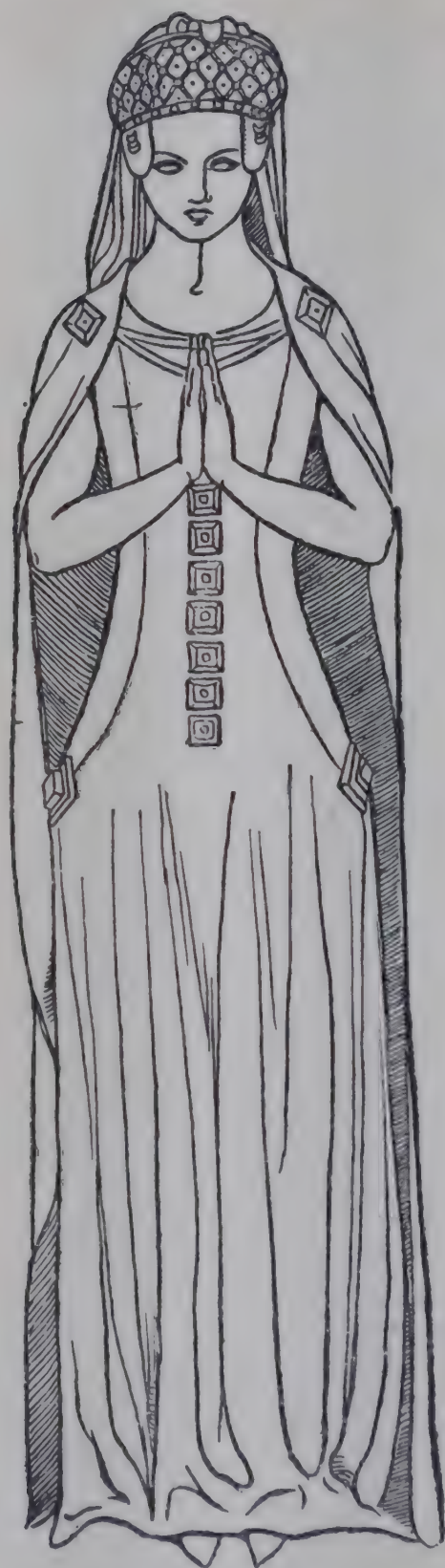


FIG. 84.—Clothes in the 14th Century.

stone, and has small windows. The door is broad, made of tough wood, and is hung upon hinges of ornamented metal work. The first storey overhangs the ground floor, and has rather big windows with little panes of glass, and the roof is covered with tiles.

What gaudy clothes some of the people wear! Look at this young nobleman. He has a short gown with large long sleeves. It is coloured green, and has white and red flowers embroidered on it. On his head he has a green velvet cap. His legs are covered with very long hose, and on his feet he has black shoes with extremely long pointed toes. The toes get in his way sometimes and trip him up; so other people, who use the same fashions, occasionally tie or chain the toes to the knees. His long hose to-day are both coloured red. Sometimes he wears one red and the other green, for he likes variety. You can see what a lady's

dress is like in the picture. She is fond of gaudy colours too.

What a filthy state the street is in! Every man who keeps pigs or horses or cows seems to throw into the street all the dirt from the pigsties, stables, and cowhouses. No scavengers ever sweep up. The open drain that runs down the middle of the street is choked up by rubbish in one place, so that the filthy water has overflowed even into the well from which the townsmen get their drinking supply. No wonder plague breaks out sometimes. Just look at that big heap of rubbish the carpenter has thrown out into the street. What with the heap on one side, and the builders at work on the other side, the traffic gets blocked up. What a crush! Cows, horses, pigs, old apple women, pedlars, priests, a blind man and his dog, a woman selling stinking herrings, all jammed tight together because the streets are not kept clear.

But every one seems jollier than the Englishmen who walk our streets to-day. Perhaps they make a living more easily than we do. Perhaps they trouble themselves less about things that we think important. Perhaps their jollity is due to playing games, for they are fond of blind man's buff, prisoner's base, leap frog, football, battledore and shuttlecock, bowls, tops, jumping, running, wrestling, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, draughts, and chess. They have more time for all these things than we have, for they do not spend all day at business. No wonder England is called "Merry England."

But they do a good deal of work. Each trade has a trade guild, which is a kind of club. All the bowyers who make bows, and the fletchers who make arrows, and the

soap-makers, and tanners, tailors, sauce-makers, weavers, cutlers, grocers, hatters, and other workers, belong to guilds. Before they can enter these, and earn full wages and do proper work, they have to serve a long apprenticeship of five or six or seven years. When they have become proper members of the guilds, they must obey the rules of the guild, and sell the things they make at a price fixed. No man is allowed to sell his things a little cheaper than another man, for this will increase his trade, and spoil the other man's. To-day, every man tries to sell more cheaply than others, so as to increase his business. We call this competition. But there is no competition in the old English town we are visiting. The guild is very particular about the quality of things made and sold by the members. The goldsmith, whose shop we looked at, has visits paid to him by the officers of the Goldsmiths' Guild, to see that his articles are as good as they should be, and not made of false metal. All his merchandise must have the mark of the Goldsmiths' Guild on it, so that his customers may know they have been examined and proved to be good by the Guild's

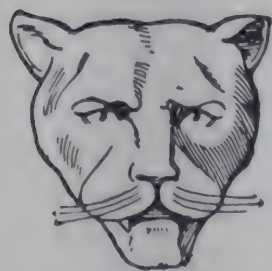


FIG. 85.—Hall-mark.

officers. The hall-mark of the Goldsmiths' Guild is a leopard's head. Sometimes the head has a crown on it, and sometimes not. Every man's scales are watched, to see that he uses no false weights. If they find any man making and selling articles who is not a member of a guild, they make complaint against him to the mayor of the town, and he is forbidden to trade. They punish all who are found to be adulterating their goods.

The guilds have great halls, where they meet and dine

and talk over business. When members fall ill and lose their trade, they receive help. If they die, the guild pays for the funeral, supports the widow and educates the children. You have all heard of the Guildhall in London, and the big dinners that are given there.

CHAPTER XIX. THE BLACK DEATH IN 1348

IN the year 1348, sailors at sea sometimes found vessels drifting about upon the waters, as though there were no men on board to steer them. When they ran alongside and leaped on the decks, eager to solve the mystery, they found dead men lying there. Down below in the bunks were more dead bodies. With terror in their hearts the sailors fled, for they knew the Black Death was upon the ship. This dreadful plague came slowly from the East across Europe, and reached England in the summer-time of 1348. It appeared first at Melcombe Regis, in Dorsetshire, and in eighteen months spread through all England. Some writers say that half the population died of it.

The bodies of those it attacked were covered with boils and sores: spitting of blood and awful fever were other signs of it. Some died of it in a day, others lingered for three or even four days. Few recovered. Those who did so were rarely attacked a second time. Once the disease appeared in a house, few could hope to escape; even if they fled at once to the fields and woods, death followed them there, and struck them down where there was none to help. The days of the plague in an English village were days of horror. To walk down the village street tried

the courage of the bravest man, but we may pretend that we are doing so.

* * * * *

How it rains ! Never in the memory of man has it rained as it is doing now upon the unhappy villagers. For six months, from June to December, it has hardly stopped. And yet the gutter, that runs through the village street, is filthy enough to spread infection. Not all the heavy rain can carry away the filth, which people throw out of their houses. On each side are silent houses with closed doors, through which no one has passed for weeks. Every one knows what lies inside. Within some houses, we hear feeble voices calling for water, and for a priest to confess sins to. Sons and daughters have deserted fathers and mothers, and husbands their wives, and fathers their children. But there are others who have been faithful.

Here comes a procession advancing slowly through the market-place ; the priest is at the head of it. Behind him come the pale survivors, singing prayers to God that He may take away the plague. They turn into the village church to attend Mass and confess their sins, for no one knows how long he has to live. The churchyard is full. More ground has been added to it, where long trenches have been dug to hold the corpses. Here comes a melancholy procession of sons and daughters, who have not feared to carry their dead to the grave. The priest is true to his duty at this dreadful time, hearing confessions, saying the Burial Service and comforting the survivors. He is the third the village has had in three months. The first fled in terror ; the second died of the plague in four weeks. How it rains !

We pass the village tavern. All the villagers apparently are not doing their duty like brave men and women. We can hear them singing and drinking, for fear has driven them to drunkenness, that makes them forget their woes. The mill wheel stands still, although floods of water roll through the sluices; the miller is dead. No carts with corn upon them are coming up: none are carrying away flour. No one is fishing for eels in the pond. The sound of the smith's hammer on his anvil is silent: the fire has long been cold. No one thinks of mending ploughs or shoeing horses. Here comes a tottering wretch with marks of the plague upon him. He makes for the river to quench his burning thirst. The monks in the abbey are suffering heavily. The abbot himself is dead. Like a hero he did his work in church, dining-hall and cloister, till his strength gave way and he died. He did not know that he should have left his work, and separated himself from his monks to prevent infection spreading. So many inmates have died, or are at the point of death, that services are given up, and the church is silent. Starvation stares the few weak survivors in the face, for supplies are nearly all eaten, and for days no carts with corn or cheese or meat have driven through the great gate.

Cows are straying in the pasture, wondering why no one comes to drive them home at milking-time. Even cows, sheep, dogs and cats seem to catch the plague. Sometimes the steward of the lord goes round to gather together the cattle of men who are dead and have left no heirs, for the animals now belong to the lord. Crops are still uncut, for there are none to reap them. Lord and steward have anxious conversations. Their villeins

no longer come in the morning to ask for orders. The lord's hay is uncut, his corn is still standing : no cheese has come to him, no wood has been gathered for the winter : his roofs need mending : and there is ploughing to be done soon for next year's harvest. But do what the steward will, he can get none to labour, except for such high wages that his master fears he will be ruined. He wonders if the Black Death will leave any villagers alive to work for him. His wide lands and woods will be useless if all men die.

And the priest is thinking that the church will be much too big now for the village. The predecessor, who fled for his life when the disease came, had actually got permission from his bishop to enlarge it, for his congregation was too big for it. He had the plans all ready, and had arranged for stone and masons. The lord had promised money. But his plans will never be used. The church will be much too big ; so big, in fact, that other parishes will give up using theirs, and come to ours, and our priest will do the work for all.

CHAPTER XX. A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY FAIR

WHAT a crowd upon the road! Pedlars with packages on their backs, horses with boxes slung across them, jugglers carrying their swords and balls and other implements, minstrels with their harps, druggists with drugs in boxes, morris dancers, and a man leading a dancing-bear and many others—all going in the same direction. They are bound for the city, where soon there is to be a great fair. All the villages on the roadside have men out watching their crops. Woe betide the luckless wretch that strays from the road to take a short cut across the villager's corn. Even if he be weary with his heavy load of gloves, or arrows or leather for the fair, he must take no short cuts.

This fair has been long in existence. Long ago a bishop of the city bought permission from a king of England to hold a fair for days together on lands outside the city wall. While the fair is going on, no citizen may sell in his shop. If he wishes to trade, he must buy a position on the fair ground from the bishop's officer, and put up a stall with goods on it. And he must give a share in his profits to the bishop. The city courts do

not sit to try offenders at the fair, for the bishop wants the fines which bad men have to pay, and so has paid the king money for leave to hold a court during fair time to try all offences. It is called a "court of dusty feet," because the men in it have travelled far on dusty roads to reach the fair.

For days they have been pouring on to the ground. Streets of wooden huts and tents have been built. The evening before the fair began, the bishop's men went round the town crying out the bishop's orders. No man is to sell goods in the town or for twenty miles round it. He may only sell on the fair ground, for the bishop wants as big profits as possible. No man is to use weights or measures in the fair until the bishop's officers have proved them to be true. If the officers find false ones, they will be burnt. No man is to sell bread except for the fixed price. Round the stalls go all the officers to examine the wines and beer by tasting them; if they are bad the casks will be broken, or perhaps the owner will be made to drink a lot of his own dirty stuff, and have the rest poured over his head. On the proper fair day, a loud blast upon the trumpet proclaims the fair open: no buying or selling is allowed till the trumpet blows. Then, while the fair lasts, the shops of the town will be shut and the streets silent; all the noise and bustle, and a great deal of jollity, will be gathered in the streets of the canvas and wooden town. All the countrymen from round about will swarm round the stalls buying knives, leather, pots, tins, wool, cloth and ribbons for their wives, or listening to the cheap-jacks shouting out the wonderful qualities of their wares. Simple country folk are easily taken in by cheats.

Here is a man dressed in a fur-lined coat with gorgeous lace and buttons, selling drugs. He does the talking while his man hands out the pills and ointments to purchasers. On the way to the fair, these two have spent all their evenings in inns, and all spare time on the roadside grass, in making up their medicines and putting them into parcels. Hark to him: "Behold, my masters, this sovereign herb, gathered in Arabia. 'Tis good for all such as suffer from rheumatism, spitting of blood, sores, St. Vitus' dance, bile, headache and toothache." He has just seen a villein in the crowd with a sorry, swollen face; that is why he mentions toothache. "Whoso, taking a little of this drug, steepeth it in water, and drinketh it, first turning his face to the east, and calling on St. Anthony with a loud voice, will straightway be delivered of all pain and melancholy, and be made whole with rejoicing." Look at the man with the swollen face. His hand is in his pocket already.

What a smell comes from this fish stall covered with salt herrings! Every one eats fish in Lent and on Fridays, so a vast trade is done in herrings and other salt fish. Here is a furrier's stall. Men say that cats are always missing after a visit from him.

Ah! here is trouble of some kind at this clothier's stall. He is accused of stretching his cloth, as he measures it out to purchasers, so that 12 yards pass for 13. The bishop's officers have hold of him, and will put him in the prison, where those who use untested and false weights are lodged till the court of dusty feet has judged them. Look at that other officer tasting the wine-seller's wine.

He looks very suspicious, but decides to let it pass, and the wine-seller looks glad.



FIG. 86.—Tumblers.



FIG. 87.—Morris Dancers.

Here we come to the entertainments. At every fair are to be found minstrels, jugglers, tumblers, wrestlers,

conjurers, actors and dancers, giving the same kind of entertainment that Bank Holiday crowds like to-day. These minstrels have very gaudy clothes, just like niggers on the sands, and are playing instruments like a fiddle,



FIGS. 88, 89.—Balancing.

bagpipes and harp. Here are some actors giving a Passion Play ; that is a play giving the story of Christ's trial before Pilate, and of His death on the cross. They have another play called "The Creation of the World," which takes seven days to finish. Let us each give them

a penny, and go and look at the juggling and dancing. There is a woman balancing herself with each hand on the point of a sword. I wonder how she does it. Look at



FIG. 90.—Performing Bear.

that boy walking on his hands, standing on his head. Any one of us can do that. There is a clown pretending



FIG. 91.—Boy robbing a Blind Beggar of his Food.

he can't ride, mounting a horse with his face to the tail and always falling off. What a crowd there is round the performing monkeys and bears! Unless that woman

is careful the bear will catch her, for he has no muzzle on.

That boy wants a whipping for robbing the blind beggar of his drink. You see he is sucking up the drink through a tube. The din of all this deafens me. Let us go home, for our pockets are empty.

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CHAPTER XXI. AN OLD ARCHER TELLS HOW HE WENT TO THE WARS WITH THE BLACK PRINCE

ALL boys and girls have heard of the victories which English archers won long ago over the French at Crecy and Poitiers and Agincourt. They acquired their skill by careful shooting at marks which they called butts. Kings, who fought the French, made laws that every man should have a bow and arrows, and practise very often; so hanging on the walls of every English cottage you would see great bows, 6 feet long, and quivers full of arrows a yard long.

Let us enter an old English village about the year 1386 and stroll to the butts on a holiday, and see what is going on. Some of the lads and young men would rather play football, but the old soldiers who have fought in France stop all games, and

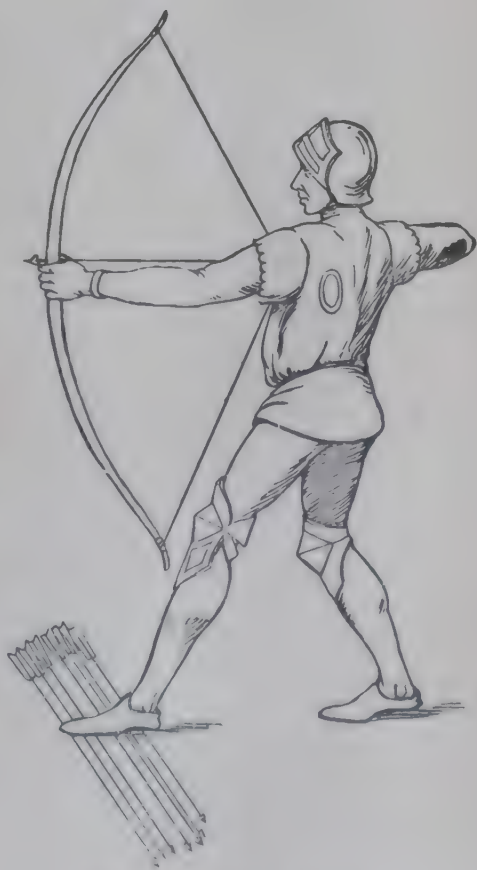


FIG. 92.—An Archer.

send the players to the shooting-ground. Even boys of seven years are made to shoot, for only by learning young can the proper skill and strength be won; and it takes a very strong right arm to bend the bow properly and discharge a lot of arrows one after the other. Look at this little fellow making his first attempt with his father and grandfather looking on.

The man in charge of the butts is evidently an old soldier. Perhaps he got that limp at Poitiers. He is



FIG. 93.—Practising at the Butts.

evidently very particular about making the lads stand in the proper position with body erect, head up and left foot a little in advance of the right. Each archer has a bow equal to himself in length. The wood for these is got from the yew tree, and so much is needed for the French wars, and Englishmen like their bows to be so long, that the yew trees growing in the English churchyards cannot supply enough. Ships are sent to Prussia on the Baltic Sea to get yew staves. The arrows are pointed with iron at one end, and at the other have a grey goose feather to guide them through the air. Every archer fits the feathered end carefully to the cord of the

bow. Then he bends the fingers of his right hand round the cord, and holds the feathered end of the arrow between the first and second fingers. He draws the feathered end up to and past his right ear, while he holds the bow firmly by his outstretched left hand. The point of the arrow then rests on his left fingers. He aims as he draws his arm back, so that he may loose the cord as soon as he has drawn it tight enough, for to be long in aiming wearies the arms.

Look at the old soldier correcting the young men. "You did not look at the mark, lad, but at your arrow-point, when you let go the string. Keep your eye on the mark." Watch him draw his own bow. Immediately his right hand has been drawn back to his ear or beyond, he lets go, and his arrow goes quite 240 yards before it buries itself in the ground, far beyond the boys' practising mark. Let us go and talk to him.

"You have been to the wars, good Sir, for you look like a soldier?"

"Yes, Sir, I fought with Prince Edward, God bless him, at Crecy and Poitiers, many a year ago. 'Twas our arrows that beat the French knights then, and they will beat them again, if we can but get the lads to do their duty at the butts. My father learned his shooting here. Once when I was a small boy he set an apple on my head for a mark, and pierced it with an arrow at a range of 150 yards. Neither he nor I ever forgot my mother's rage when she heard of the deed.

"When the king's officers came round to levy archers for the French war, my father would have me go, and indeed the pay attracted me, for we got threepence a day

if we marched on foot, and sixpence if we were mounted on horses. All the best of us they marched to Portsmouth, and there gave us each a bow and twenty-four arrows, iron caps, and tunics of stuffed leather. With great noise and fuss, all sorts of supplies were put on board ship, 4000 carts and horses, so that all luggage might follow the army in France, tents for the knights, mills to grind corn, iron for horseshoes and forges for the smiths' use, ovens for baking, wood, bundles of bows and arrows, gunpowder for the new cannon, and even the

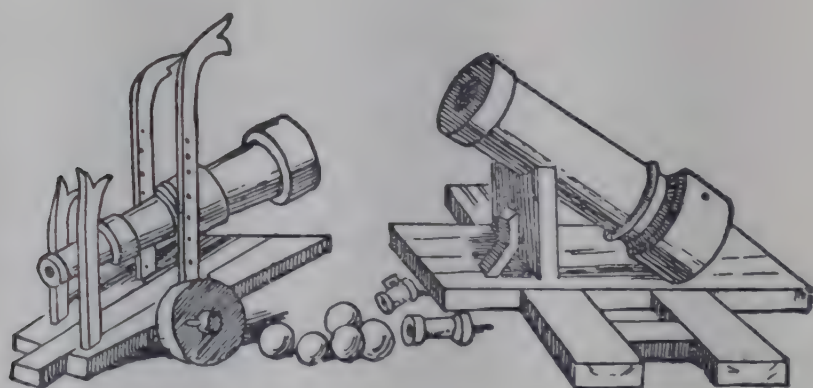


FIG. 94.—Cannon of the 14th Century.

king's hawks and hounds and huntsmen ; for the king hunted even in an enemy's country.

“ All the world knows how we beat the French at Crecy. First they sent their cross-bowmen against us, but we shot six arrows to their one, and every one of ours flew further than theirs, so we killed many of them without harm to ourselves. Then came their armed men on horseback. Our arrows went through their breast-plates and helmets. We aimed at their horses mostly, for once his horse is down a knight is useless. Wounded horses kicked right and left, reared their heads and

turned about, so that those behind could not press forward. For a time scarcely a Frenchman could come near enough to hurt us; from a distance we slew them at our ease, till our arms were tired with drawing the cords.

“When at last the French reached our lines we



FIG. 95.—Sword and Shield of Edward III.

archers stepped back amongst our friends and drew our swords. So hard pressed were we that our prince, who was but sixteen years old, was beaten to the ground and only saved by his standard bearer. The Earl of Warwick sent for help to King Edward, who was standing on a windmill in the rear watching the fight. ‘Is my son dead, unhorsed, or so badly wounded,’ said he, ‘that he

cannot help himself ? ’ ‘ Nay, Sire, please God,’ was the reply, ‘ but he has great need of your help.’ ‘ Return and tell the Earl of Warwick,’ said the king, ‘ not to send for me this day, nor expect that I shall come as long as my son has life ; and say that I command them to let the

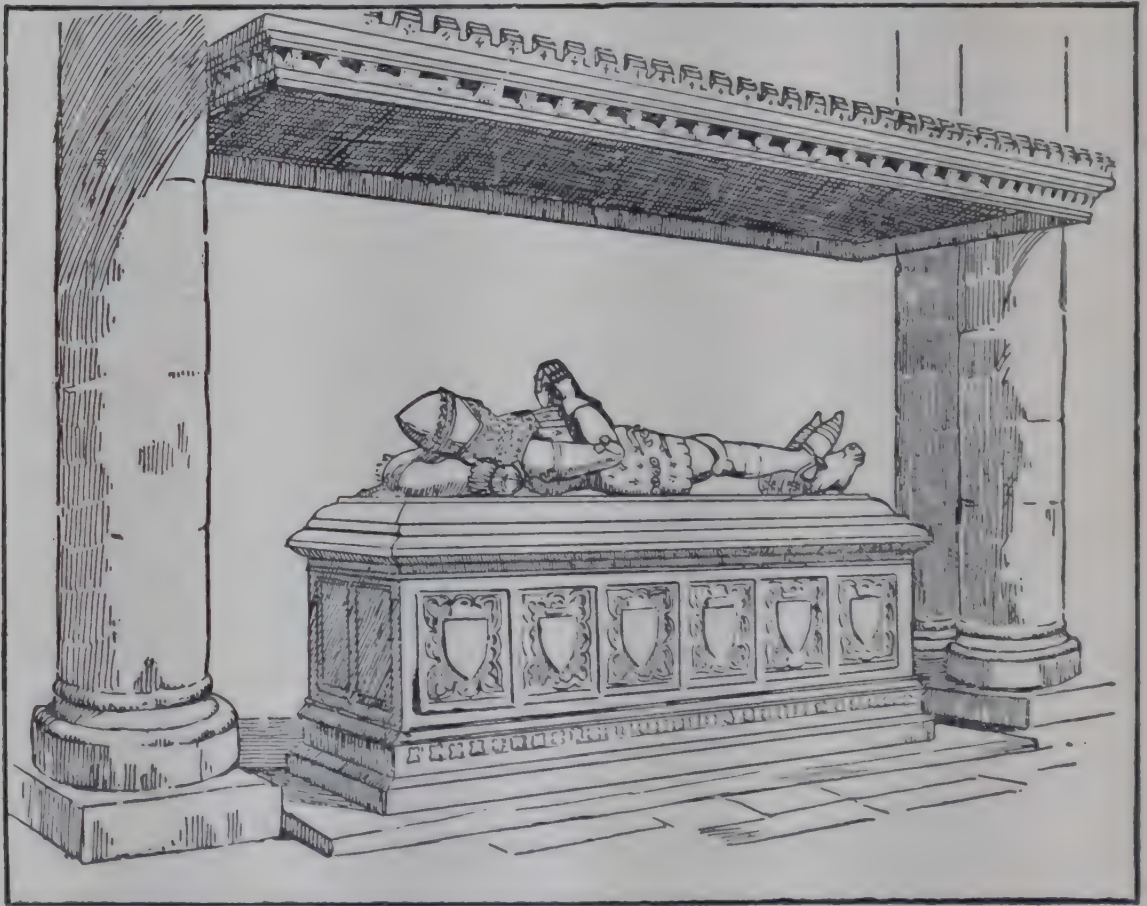


FIG. 96.—Tomb of the Black Prince at Canterbury.

boy win his spurs : for I am determined, God willing, that all the glory of this day shall be his.’

“ Sir,” said the old soldier, “ I saw the prince myself, when the fight was over, bow himself to the ground and, like a respectful son, give all honour to the king, his father. Alack, ’twas forty years ago, and now he lies in the cathedral of old Canterbury Town behind the high

altar. Beside him hang his helmet and his shield and gauntlets, and velvet coat. I took my grandson to see them not long ago.

“Many a battle have I seen since Crecy; many a town, village and monastery have I plundered. The country of France was rich, the barns were full of corn. In the fields were cows and sheep, pigs and horses. The houses were stuffed with valuables, gold and silver articles, carpets, goblets, linen sheets; everything that we could carry off we seized, for soldiers deserve more than their pay. Once I brought home a rare feather bed, and if you will come now to my cottage, my wife will give you a draught of ale from a silver tankard that I carried off from a French monastery.”

CHAPTER XXII. AN ENGLISH VILLAGE IN 1381, AND HOW THE VILLAGERS WENT TO LONDON TO SEE THE KING

“ YES, Sir, all who remember the Hurling Time are gone,
—all except me.”

“ What time was that, old man ? ”

“ ’Twas in the year 1381, when we villagers rose
against our masters and marched away to London town.”

Down we sat on the edge of the common, and the
old man pictured to me the time when peasants held
mastery over England, and gave their orders even to the
king.

“ You must know, Sir, that for years after the Great
Plague, half the houses in the villages were empty, and
many lands, where barley and rye used to grow, were
thick with weeds and grass. The lord, our master,
suffered by the lack of men. In mornings, only few
villagers appeared before his steward for orders ; his
lands were not ploughed ; his barns became empty, his
forge was silent and his mill half idle. And his store-
houses, that once were filled with the bacon his villagers
carried to him, and with cheese, eggs, butter, honey, fowls
and salt fish, were only half full. And his money box
was empty. And all this because the plague had emptied

the village. Then the lord, that he might live as well as his fathers, gave orders to his steward that each villager should be made to do the services, and pay the moneys, that were down against his name in the manor account book, which was in the form of a roll, and even more than were entered there, if they could be forced to do so. So when we appeared at the manor for orders, we got so many that the doing of them almost broke our



FIG. 97.—Steward watching Harvesters.

backs. The steward was ever at our heels at the ploughing time, that furrows might be deep and straight; no man might rest at the harvesting. Woe betide the man or woman who came late to work or stayed away; and always the supplies we brought to the manor barns were carefully measured, and their quality tested, till the steward became the best hated man in the village, and threats of murder were muttered behind his back. Some of the high-spirited among us openly complained. Once we refused to work or pay. But the lord brought officers of the law against us. The sheriff appeared with soldiers at his back, and the stocks and whipping-posts were busy for a week, till with suffering and heavy fines our hearts broke. Then some fled. They left behind them

their houses and lands, because as long as they lived in that village they were not free enough. They took refuge in the town, to make a living in freedom as hired labourers. But when lord or steward visited the town, the fugitives slunk along back lanes to avoid meeting them. For many fugitives were caught and sent back to work harder than before.

“Besides the villagers who had lands, there were in the village men who had no lands, but laboured for hire; and these men the lord needed more after the plague than before it, although there were fewer of them. When they saw his need, they asked higher wages. But our lord and other lords in wrath caused Parliament to pass laws forbidding labourers to ask more than before the plague. For a day’s haymaking a labourer was to get one penny, and for a day’s reaping twopence or threepence. Some lords, in their desire to get their crops reaped before they rotted in the field, or to get their lands ploughed in time, paid as much as sixpence or eightpence a day, but often their labourers boasted loudly about this. Then, because they had asked for higher wages, they were branded like cattle with hot irons, or outlawed so that men might kill them without punishment. And no gentleman would speak to the lord who paid high wages. Then the woods became full of angry exiled men; life and property were no longer safe; and all because labourers refused to accept twopence a day, and asked for sixpence.

“For thirty years after the plague the villages were full of strife. Then men began to come to us, saying all men should be free from compulsory work on lord’s lands, and should pay for the houses and cornfields in money at

fourpence an acre. I remember John Ball came among us, and spoke hot words one evening on this very common where we sit, saying all men, rich and poor, were the children of Adam and Eve, and therefore were all equal in rank to one another. His words pleased us well, and next day we refused to work. But 'twas the same old story. We surrounded the hall at dawn, and forced the lord to grant our wishes. He feared for his life, and for his family's sake gave us our will; but next day came the sheriff and his men. Gallows were set up, the ringleaders were hanged, and the stocks and whipping-posts were busy as of old, and naught came of it all but misery.

“ At last, in 1381, there came into the angry village tax collectors from the king, demanding one shilling from every person over fifteen years of age. For it was in the time of the long war with France, and money was necessary. But our pockets were empty, and we cheated the Government as tax-payers will. The tax-gatherers desired to know how many people over fifteen years of age were in each family, so that the number of shillings to be paid might be known. So the fathers of the village left out unmarried daughters, aged mothers and aunts who lived under their roofs, and only counted their wives and grown-up sons. And for these a shilling each was paid. But all England played the same trick, and down on us came more tax-gatherers in a great rage to demand more money. Some villages paid up, but others, and ours among them, shouted aloud, ‘ Not a penny more,’ and stoned the tax-gatherers out.

“ Then, Sir, arose that Wat Tyler whose name you must have heard. At his bidding men took down from

their cabin walls the smoke-blackened bows their fathers had fought with in France, drew their rusty swords and picked up axes they had found on French battlefields. Those that had no weapon used sticks and scythes. The landlords were frightened. We broke into their houses, seized their silver plate and drove off their cattle. But chiefly we burnt their hated rolls, in which were written down what work the villagers had to do, and what money they had to pay; for we desired to be free men, paying



FIG. 98.—Old London Bridge.

the lord fourpence an acre for our lands. Some of our tyrants fled to the woods whither they had driven many better men, and even the gentler of them, in fear of their lives, promised us all we asked.

“ We thought that if we could see the king in London we should get what we wished. Our king was Richard, son of the Prince Edward who fought so well at Crecy. To London then we marched along the straight road yonder, which men say the Romans made, and so eager

were we that in two days we were camped upon Blackheath, standing upon the banks above Greenwich: we saw London lying beneath us higher up the river. The very next day, Sir—'twas a Thursday in the middle of June—we crossed London Bridge, that was more like a street than a bridge, for it had houses on each side of it, and even a church on it. In London we met men like ourselves, coming from Essex for the same purpose.

“Forthwith we plundered the Savoy, the palace which John of Gaunt, the king's uncle, had stuffed with the spoils of France. All its beds and sheets and coverlets were burnt; its furniture we flung into the street that is called Strand, hacked it there in pieces, and flung it into the river. In the night we feasted and drank plentifully, for certain of the citizens hated the king's officers as we did, and gave us of their best. On Friday morning, with Wat Tyler at our head, we met King Richard, a boy of fourteen, at Mile End in the green fields where Londoners enjoy their summer sports. There King Richard gave us all we asked. No man was to be forced to labour for another after this. We were to pay only fourpence an acre for our lands. But we would have it down in writing, so thirty clerks were set to work at once to write for their lives, that we might carry the king's promise back to our homes on parchment for others to see.

“But all our work was not yet done. Hiding in the Tower was Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Hales, the treasurer, whose lives we had come to London to take. To the Tower we followed Wat. We found our men in the chapel there.

“Well, Sir, may the Saints forgive us, we tore the men from God's holy altar, and struck off their heads

upon Tower Hill. Before nightfall we slew 150 foreigners, for we loved not foreigners then, and we slew some English also, lawyers whom we hated, for they enforced wicked laws.

“But on Saturday there came a change. Most Londoners liked not sacking of palaces and murdering of defenceless men. So the king met us once more with Wat Tyler at Smithfield, a smooth green field outside the city walls and near a monastery of monks.

“’Tis a boy’s tale that happened there. A boy did a brave thing, and all boys know of it. ’Twas a hot day and Wat, who was an unmannerly fellow, called for water, and rinsed his mouth with disgusting noises in the very presence of the king. Then he called for beer, and having impudently drunk it, climbed on to his horse. Some servant behind the king, being a Kentish man, recognised Wat, and openly said he was the greatest thief and robber in the county. Whereat Wat tried to stab him before the king, and was struck by Walworth, the Mayor of London. We drew our bows to shoot. Right up to the points of our arrows rode the king, and cried, ‘Sirs, will ye shoot your king? I will be your chief and captain; ye shall have from me all ye ask. Only follow me to the fields further out.’ We knew him for his father’s son, and slacked our bows to follow him to Clerkenwell fields.

“While we obeyed his call, Walworth called out armed men, that spread round us like an arc. Then in fear we fell to our knees and begged the king’s mercy. When he consented, the Essex men marched away north. The knights guided us over London Bridge, and so we got home to our villages.

“Then the temper of the king and his counsellors changed. All promises of freedom were broken. ‘Serfs ye are and serfs ye will remain,’ was the message that reached us. Officers came round in arms to our villages, and seized the ringleaders. Gallows were set up, and some 110 ended their lives thereon. Serfdom was not ended for all our labour.”

CHAPTER XXIII. GOING ON PILGRIMAGE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

HAD we lived in the fourteenth century, every one of us would have known what pilgrims were. We should have seen them passing on foot or on horseback through our towns, or along our country roads, on their way to pray at the tomb of some holy man who had died long before. Sometimes in sickness or danger, they had called to him for help, and thought it right to go and thank him at his tomb. Sometimes they went merely for a jolly holiday, and when they returned home they talked for months about what they had seen and done.

Spring seems to have been the usual time for going on pilgrimage. The rains and mud of winter were drying up, and the heat and dust of summer had not yet come to make tramping and riding unpleasant. Canterbury was the spot to which most English pilgrims went, for there was buried Saint Thomas à Becket, the great Archbishop whom Henry the Second's men had slain in his cathedral. At the tomb of the murdered man, miracles were said to have been performed on sick people, who recovered their health by touching the saint's garments, or drinking water in which a drop or two of his blood had been mixed. Soon many pilgrims began to walk and ride

from all parts of England to Canterbury to pray for forgiveness of sins or recovery from illness.

But all pilgrims did not go to Canterbury. There was a piece of wood at Chester which was said to be part of the Cross on which Christ had died. Men said that if



FIG. 99.—Canterbury Pilgrims.

they prayed before it their sins would be forgiven. Some went to Westminster Abbey to ask the aid of St. Edward the Confessor, or to Durham to St. Cuthbert's shrine, or to many another place. And happy was the man or woman who could carry home a tattered rag, which had once been part of a Saint's clothing, or a piece of his finger nail, or a bit of leather from his shoe: happier still the

man who could buy a bone of a Saint, or even steal it. Bad men pretended to sell relics like these. We read in the "Canterbury Tales," which Chaucer wrote, of a pilgrim who carried round a veil, which, he said, had belonged to the Virgin Mary. Men thought that to die with a relic in one's hands made Heaven safe.

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Let us pretend we are going on pilgrimage. We are not rich enough to get horses, so we must go on foot. We



FIG. 100.—A Pilgrim.

will go barefoot, for thus most true pilgrims go. A long woollen mantle, with a cape attached in case of wet weather, will be necessary, a felt hat, a long staff and a bottle, that we can sling over our shoulders. Perhaps we may bring some holy water home in it. We must take a wallet to hold food, and something to rub on our feet when they are blistered. We may have a relic in the wallet on the way home. Men on horseback can take another horse to carry luggage, and need no staff. But we who are

on foot must travel light, and our staves will help us in jumping streams and muddy places.

When all our preparations have been made, and the day for starting has come, we go early in the morning to our little village church with our friends and relations. The priest prays that we may come safely home, the

better for our pilgrimage. He blesses our wallets and staves, sprinkles them with holy water, and administers Holy Communion to us. Then he bids us farewell.

We are going to Canterbury, but London on the way thither is our first stopping place. What crowds of people! Like simple countryfolk we think every man we meet is either a lord or a common thief, so we keep a tight hold on our money. What a hubbub there is in the streets! All the shopkeepers seem to think we want to buy something and deafen us with shouts of "What do ye lack?" A kindly priest, seeing we are pilgrims, directs us over London Bridge to the Tabard Inn in Southwark High Street.

Over the Bridge we go, pausing to look at the traitors' heads mouldering up above us. They say Wat Tyler's is there. We find the inn, but what a big place it is! There are people in fine clothes riding into it on horseback. It is no place for barefooted pilgrims like us, so we find a simpler and cheaper looking place not far off, and there we stay. In the morning we grumble at paying a halfpenny each for our lodging. We shall sleep under trees or in barns after this, if the weather will let us. What a fine-looking lot of people there are riding out of the Tabard! Why! I declare they are going on pilgrimage too, so the kindly priest was right when he said we should find pilgrims there. Some of them are rich folk. There's a knight who looks a gentleman among them, and a prioress who looks a lady. I see only one really thin horse in the party, and his rider looks as thin as himself. His clothes are threadbare. Ah, I see he has a book under his arm. No doubt he is a student, and thinks more of books than of clothes. The

host of the Tabard seems to be in charge of the party. See him doffing his hat to the prioress. There's a miller,



FIG. 101.—Outside and Inside of an Inn.

too, tuning up his bagpipes which he carries under his arm. We soon lose sight of them.

Off we tramp, and reach the road men say the Romans made. A couple of hours bring us to Blackheath, where Wat Tyler and his rebels camped. The hot weather makes us thirsty, and some of us are glad whenever we see a house that has a pole with a bunch of twigs hanging from it, for there we know there is beer for sale. The ale-wives are sometimes old, and their beer is not as good as it should be. From the top of Shooter's Hill we look

back on London as we rest awhile under the shade of the trees. The riding party in front of us seem to have halted here too. No doubt they have been telling stories, and listening to the miller's pipes to while away the time. With them so near we feel safer than we should otherwise do, for robbers infest this place.

But you do not wish to hear everything we do.

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For several days we marched steadily forward. At night some of us slept in barns, others in halfpenny inns. In the dawn we always gathered again in the village street, shouting out "To Canterbury" or "St. Thomas" to wake up the lazy ones, and tell them we were starting. What jolly days they were! What stories we heard, and what a lot of friends we made!



FIG. 102.—Drinking Outside an Alehouse.

Quite a lot of us have bought bells—Canterbury bells they are called, because Canterbury pilgrims carry them,—and as we enter little towns on our way we make a procession, ringing our bells and blowing on our pipes, so that we attract a little attention from both dogs and people. There are many little churches on the roadside, and many a time, while some of us drank at ale houses

others of us have entered the churches to pray. Sometimes a rest was pleasant, for bare feet get sore with tramping. Others at such a time go down to some stream to wash themselves or even their clothes, which they then hang on bushes in the sun to dry.

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At last, from the top of Hambledown Hill, we sight Canterbury, the goal of our pilgrimage, with the towers of the cathedral standing up into the sky. Sore feet and weary limbs are forgotten as we stride down the hill. Story-telling is over, pipes are silent, for the ground is almost sacred. Lodgings we soon find, for landlords are everywhere about us, asking us to stay at their houses. And then we enter the cathedral.

At the door we are sprinkled with holy water. Some of us go about gazing at tombs, monuments and stained glass windows; but others, remembering the object with which we have come, seek out the spot where the Saint was slain, the tip of the sword that scattered his brains on the stones, and the very skull of the blessed martyr himself, which we kiss most reverently. And last of all we behold the tomb where the Saint's body lies. All ablaze it is with gold and precious stones, some of them as large as a goose's egg. High up above it we see the chamber where a guardian monk watches by night and day, to protect the shrine from robbers.

Then, as the manner is, we buy proofs of our

pilgrimage, brooches and badges to pin on hat or cloak, and so we go back to our lodgings to dinner.

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At last we come home ; once more we go to the village church to give thanks, and then we sit down amongst our friends to tell them all that we have seen and heard and done.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE LOLLARDS IN THE VILLAGES

“ I HEAR the sound of preaching on the green,” said a villager one evening ; “ let us go and listen. Strolling preachers have been coming here pretty often lately. They are all dressed like this one, in long brown gowns with large pockets, and carry staves in their hands to help them along the roads. People call them Lollards. I see the lord of the manor listening. Let us stroll up and hear the sermon.”

We found the preacher was speaking very bitterly against images in churches, and telling a story of how some friends of his had pulled down an image of the Virgin Mary, and cut it up to make fuel for a fire. Most villagers in those days revered images of the Virgin and the Saints, as Roman Catholics do to-day, but the Lollard was urging them to worship God and Jesus Christ only ; like all Lollards he quoted the Bible a great deal, and particularly the second Commandment. Many friars taught people to reverence relics, such as pieces of wood, said to have been cut from the cross, or bones said to be those of the apostles, or thorns from the crown which Christ wore on the cross. But Lollard preachers taught men to laugh at relics, saying there was no commandment in the Bible to honour them.

Every one wishes to obtain forgiveness of his sins. In the times of the Lollards, men went on pilgrimages to holy places far away like Rome or Jerusalem, because there, the priest told them, they could win pardon. In Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," we can read an account of a journey which some English people made to the shrine or tomb of Thomas à Becket; and in some parts of England there are still roads called by such names as the "Pilgrims' Way." Lollards despised pilgrimage, and even spoke of pilgrims very much as we should speak of idle tramps. Many priests pretended to forgive sins, in order to collect money in return. They were not as careful as they should have been to see that men were really sorry for their sins, and for this the Lollards attacked them.

The Lollards also spoke very bitterly against monks, whom they accused of leading idle lives in monasteries, and of thinking more of what they ate than of singing hymns and making prayers to God. They were angry, because the monks ate the corn and meat which poor peasants had worked hard to produce.

Every Lollard thought it very important that every one should read the Bible. Up till this time there had been no English translation of the whole Bible but only of parts. But John Wicliffe, who was leader of the Lollards, caused the whole Bible to be translated from Latin into English, and said that in its pages a man could find all that he needed to know about God. The priests of those days did not like common people to read the Bible, and so they preferred to have it in Latin, a language which the common people could not read. But many priests were good men, and liked to hear the

Lollards attacking pilgrimages, images, relics, and bad priests and monks and friars.

After listening for a while to the Lollard on the green, who was talking about things like these, we turned to the villager and asked, "Does your priest like these Lollards?" "Yes," said he, "for he hates friars and monks as much as they do. The friars are no longer as holy as they were long ago, and have become mere

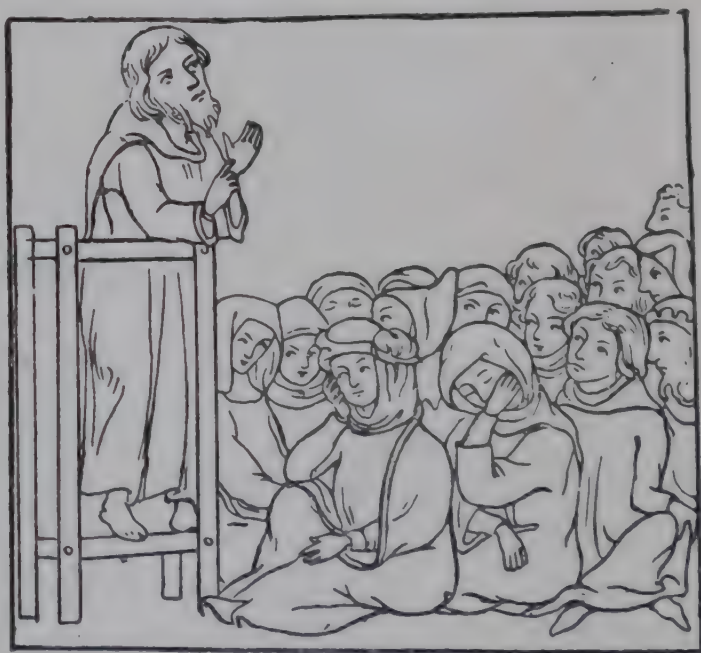


FIG. 103.—Friar preaching in the Open Air.

beggars. They are constantly coming to this village and making money by selling pardons for sins, without taking any pains to learn whether the sinner is really repentant; and they do not impose a sufficient penance. All they care about is the money. I know a man who has sworn a false oath, and is afraid to confess his sin to the priest, and ask for forgiveness, because he fears a heavy penance will be imposed on him. But he knows Friar John will soon be here on his rounds, and will grant him forgiveness

for money only, without penance. All this leads to wickedness in the village. What is the use of our priest preaching the need of a good life and punishing people for sin, if friars are constantly coming here to sell forgiveness for money? These men make money too, by selling charms which will bring to the farmer who buys them a good crop of barley, or heal his cattle; for the simple villagers believe everything these scoundrels tell them. It is said that by listening to confessions and selling pardons, a friar gets more money from the villagers in a day than a priest gets in two months. So the priest likes to hear Lollards preaching against friars and stirring up the villagers to refuse them money.

“ He hates the monks too, and well he may, for they run away with much of his living. In times long ago, the priest of this village used to receive tithe, that is the tenth part of every man’s crops, eggs, fowls, cheese, so that he might be properly paid for his work, have something to mend the church with when the roof leaked, and money to supply bread and wine and wax and altar-cloths. He used to charge fees for marriages, christenings, and funerals, and had also some land of his own which villagers used to cultivate for him. In this way he could live like a priest should, and have something for the poor. But for many years now, the monks of the monastery, whose church tower you can see through the trees, have been allowed by the bishop to take all the tithes and fees and lands for themselves, and the priest, who is called a vicar, only gets from the monks a very small part of what he should get. Indeed, he is so poor that he is tempted almost to steal. His vicarage is not fit to live in: he needs a new bell for his

church; the roof wants repairing, and the chancel threatens to fall down altogether unless some money is spent on it soon.

“Not content with all this money, the monks have shut up the church in the next parish, and do not keep a priest there, because they say the congregation is too small, since the Black Death, to need a priest. The vicarage there has been made into a public house. So our priest is expected now to do the work of two parishes.

“The Lollards know all this, and are always preaching that monasteries should be abolished, and all their lands and money given back to people who work. This man preaching this evening urged his hearers, in his sermon last night, not to pay their tithe to the tithe collectors of the monastery, who will come soon to collect it. He told us tales of other parishes, where monkish tithe-gatherers have been beaten by villagers, and of the storming of the great abbey of St. Edmondsbury many years ago by parish priests and their flocks. The monks will be here soon for payment, and I fear that violence may be done, for our villagers are very poor, and have to pay heavy taxes for this long war in France.” We had to come away before our friend had finished what he had to say.

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You will not be surprised to hear that some Lollards were put to death for their preaching. The kings of that time supported the Church, and Parliament passed an Act ordering that Lollards should be burned. So some died at the stake.

CHAPTER XXV. HOME FROM THE FRENCH WARS IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

“FOR five years Alan and I had been at the wars in France. Archers we were, like our fathers and grandfathers before us. As boys we had listened to tales of the Prince and his captains, of brave doings at Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, and when we grew up to twenty years or so, nothing would content us except to go and see the world for ourselves. And, indeed, our fathers were satisfied that it should be so, for every Englishman in those days was brought up to believe that the French were his natural enemies. So we had buckled on our fathers' swords, picked up the bows they had taught us to use so well, and enlisted under the command of one of the famous fighting captains. At last we came back to disembark with all our plunder on English soil once more. What a curious spoil we had gathered in the fields of France, to toss out upon Southampton wharf and carry home ! Some of us had pillows and mattresses which had once been used in fine French houses. Others were laden with fair linen sheets, basins of pewter, or velvet doublets from French wardrobes. Lying about on the wharf you might have seen candlesticks and salt-cellars of silver, handkerchiefs of fine French cloth, gowns of satin which some archer hoped to array his

wife in, jackets of mail, bundles of arrows, harness of horses, spurs, knives, precious woods, boxes of ivory, cases of sweetmeat and casks of wine. You would have laughed to see some of us wondering how we were to get all our stuff home.

“ Alan and I joined some others who were to travel in our direction, and whom we could trust, and, having bought pack-horses, we put our goods upon their backs and started. But what a disorder there was in England ! Thieves everywhere, sometimes hanging from gibbets at cross roads, sometimes sitting in the stocks of the villages we passed through, but more often loitering round us day and night to see what they might steal. The very innkeepers were in league with the rascals, sent them word of our arrival, warned them of the road we meant to take, and egged them on. When we took lodging for the night we slept with our property beside us in the room, and with one of us awake to give the alarm in case of need. Our real troubles began when our party became small, as some of us turned off the road to reach their own villages. It was then that Alan and I bethought ourselves of turning pilgrims, in order to put ourselves and our booty under the protection of Holy Church. But whoever heard of pious pilgrims driving pack-horses with counterpanes, mattresses, blankets and sheets upon them, or carrying in their wallets, for greater safety, the sacred silver vessels which once had stood upon a French altar ? Besides, any child could have told by a glance that we were soldiers home from the war.

“ As luck would have it we got our greatest fright near home. We passed a gentleman's house, which some ruffians were plundering. Indeed our closeness to safety had made

us careless, when we rounded a corner into the full view of the band. With a shout they were on us. In a moment our goods were on the ground, greedy rascals had their hands in our wallets, and the fruit of weary days in France was gone. 'Twas then I recognised the leader of the band for an archer of my own company, who had come home the year before. 'Simon, Simon,' I shouted, 'wouldest rob old comrades?' 'By the Saints,' said he, ''tis Alan and John home again. Hands off, hands off, my friends!' And so we got back our goods when we had thought all lost. 'But, Simon,' I said, ''tis a poor game to rob Englishmen. Moreover, is there no sheriff about?' 'A man must live,' said he, 'even if he be an old soldier; and you and Alan will be joining us before long. As for the sheriff, if he touch us, his court house will be fuller than he likes of our friends; moreover, we serve the greatest lord of the countryside. Knowest thou not his badge? No sheriff dare touch us if he values his life.'

"And thus we reached home. For a while it was pleasant to do nothing all day long except tell tales of France, but soon dulness came over us. Our friends thought that we would now become farmers, follow the plough, handle the sickle, milk cows and drive pigs. But we longed for the jolly companionship of archers we had known, and for the familiar excitements of a soldier's life. We thought of Simon and his band, and when word came round that his lord was on the look-out for likely men, and was offering sixpence a day and quarters in his hall to all who would wear his badge, and serve him in his quarrels, we took to the road once more, and made our way to his castle.

"Simon took us in with welcome to his master.

‘These be true men,’ said he, ‘fit to do all manner of things that they be ordered to do, fit to guard and strengthen your walls; and moreover they be tried men and cunning in war and in feats of arms. They can shoot both with guns and bows, and mend the one or string the other; keep watch and ward and build fortifications. They be no brawlers nor drunkards but prudent men, and meet to wear your badge.’ And so the lord took us both to be his soldiers, gave us capes and caps with his badges on them, that all might know us for his men, assigned us beds and armour, and gave us places in his hall. To feed the hundreds of us his cooks roasted six oxen whole every day, and broached many casks of ale. So we became soldiers once more, but were sworn this time to fight against and plunder our fellow Englishmen, and even go against the king, if such were the will of our lord. And all England was full of old soldiers like us, serving lords like ours, so that the king and his servants were unable to keep order. No man could sleep in peace at night for fear that robbers might burn his house above his head while he slept.

“Now our master had an enemy, on whom he desired to take vengeance, and it was for this reason that he had taken us into his service. At first we made many preparations. We brought into our castle many bows and arrows, spears, and coats of mail. We deepened the moat, and led into it much water. We strengthened the doors with iron bars, and in all the walls made loopholes, through which to shoot at any who might attack us. And we kept in the cellars great supplies of salt bacon and beef and flour, in case we were besieged. Then one day, when our master’s enemy was absent from home, we went against his castle with many men and seized it.

Against their will we compelled his tenants to carry out all their master's wealth, his beds, sheets, blankets, basins, jugs, silver cups, knives, candlesticks, barrels of ale and wine, pans, pantry dishes, spoons, tubs for brewing ale, pokers and iron hooks from his fireplaces, his clothes, and those of his wife and children, his



FIG. 104.—Bodiam Castle.

jewellery, all the salt beef and pork, his barley and rye, his armour which he had used in the French wars, and everything else that we could find. We went into the church and drove out with threats the priest, who tried to protect the holy vessels, the cups and candlesticks on the altar. Of all we made a heap outside on the ground, and then forced the tenants at the sword's point to bring their carts and carry our spoil to our own castle; and

while they were doing so we set the remainder to beat down the walls of their master's castle with battering rams, destroy the drawbridge, fill up the moat, tear down the doors, saw them in two, and destroy all the iron work, so that his castle might never be strong again. We had had orders to slay all his soldiers, so we went about the



FIG. 105.—A Battering Ram.

village searching for them in the villagers' barns, and thrusting our spears into every heap of corn that we found there, lest any should be in hiding underneath. We posted notices warning them, that if ever we found any of them in the village again, or even met them in any neighbouring place, we would slay them without warning. At last, when the walls of the castle were almost level with the ground, we drove off all the cattle of the lord

that we could find, and put them in our master's folds and stables. And to the tenants we gave warning that, if they paid rent in the future to their old master, we would burn their houses above their heads, and take from them every stick of property and every cow and sheep.

“Of course their unhappy lord appealed to the king's

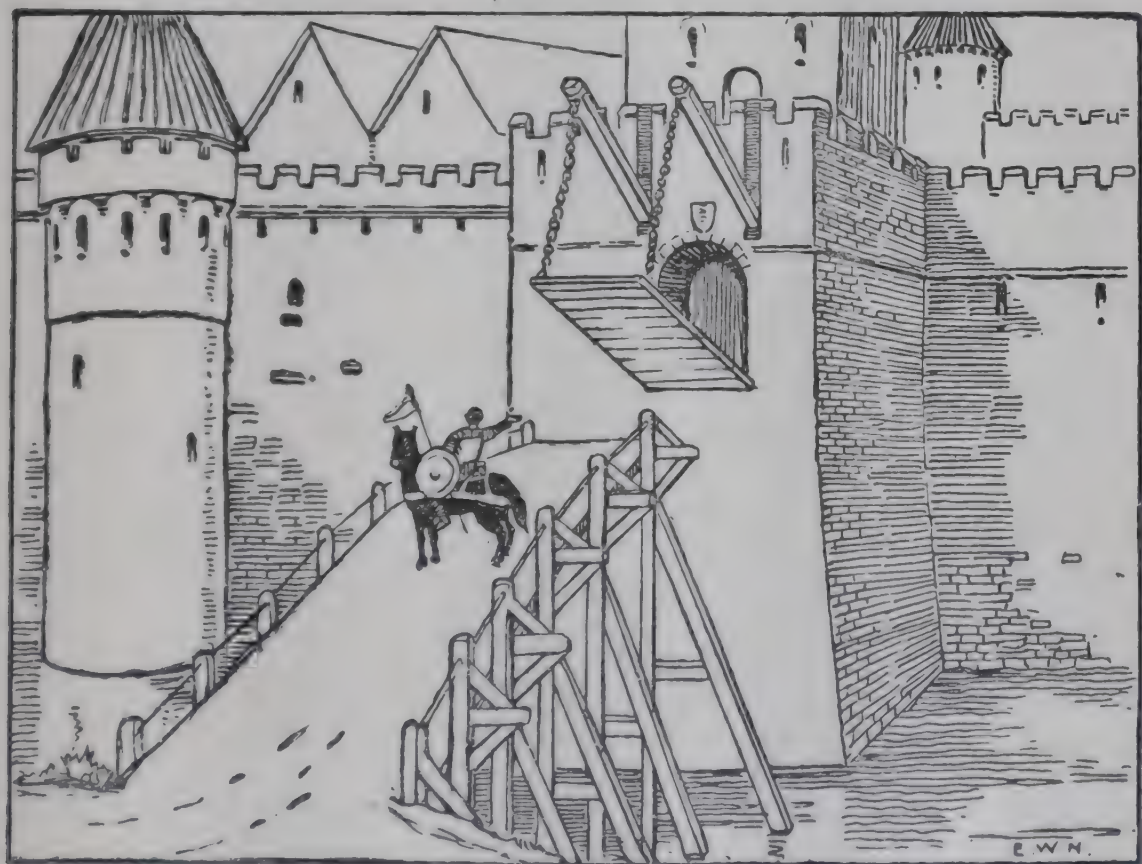


FIG. 106.—A Drawbridge.

servants to punish the robbers, and at last, after many days, the sheriff summoned our master to trial for what he had done. Our master only laughed, and we laughed also. When the day of trial came, we all marched into the county town in our armour, and went singing along the streets, to show that we were not at all frightened of the king or his sheriff's court, till we saw some of our

enemies, who had come to help their master in the trial. With shouts we drew our swords and chased them for their lives out of the town. So when the court met we packed the whole of it, and there was not any enemy to be seen. You would have laughed to see the sheriff sitting in fear of his life and all his servants too. He knew that he ought to punish us, and we knew that he ought to do so. But how could he punish hundreds of armed men, when he had no soldiers of his own? Some of us openly jeered at him, and shook our fists in his face, so that he postponed the trial. Every one of us went home, after doing what we liked in the streets, and drinking in all the ale shops without paying a penny; for the whole place was scared to death at the sight of us, and every shopkeeper had put his shutters up to protect his goods.

“Some say there will never be peace in England again till a king arises who will be strong enough to forbid all lords to keep soldiers in their castles.”

CHAPTER XXVI. THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER

FOUR hundred years ago books were so dear that only the richest people could afford to buy them. The man who had thirty was considered to have quite a library. Because they were dear, rules were made for their use. They were not to be touched with dirty hands, nor put on the table at meal times ; no one was to eat fruit or cheese while reading them ; greasy elbows were not to be placed on the pages. They were dear in price, because every copy had to be written out by hand, and this was a long process which only educated men could perform. If you had taken a walk along the northern cloister of almost any monastery, you would certainly have found one or two monks industriously spending their hours of leisure in copying. A monastery that had a famous book was always being asked for copies.

Had we lived, therefore, in that far-off time we should have been very interested in the discovery of a cheaper way of making books by printing them, and if we had been Londoners, we should certainly have visited the house of the man who first introduced printing into England. His name was William Caxton, and his house was in Westminster close to the Abbey. In those days, houses did not have numbers. They were distinguished

from one another by signs. Outside Caxton's house we should have seen a picture of a shield with a red band running from top to bottom. This band was called a "red pale." Caxton used to send out advertisements, as printers do to-day, and we still have the words he used, in which he bids all who want religious books of a certain kind to come to his shop in Westminster at the red pale. The house is gone now and no one knows exactly where it stood.

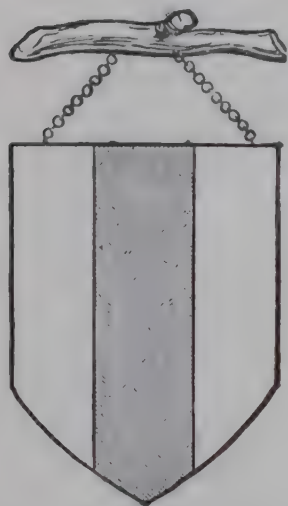


FIG. 107.—The Red Pale.

Caxton tells us himself how he became a printer. For thirty years he had lived as a cloth merchant at Bruges in Belgium. When he gave up business, he says he remembered that idleness was the

mother of vice, and so he sought a good occupation, and found it in study. In a French book, which he read, he found many strange stories which gave him great pleasure. Then, because the book was new, and had never been read in English, he thought it would be "a good business" to translate it. When he had performed his task he found that many people desired to buy the book, and constantly asked him to write out fresh copies. Then, he says that with copying his hand grew "weary and not steadfast" and his eyes were "dimmed with over-much looking on the white paper." So, having heard of a newly discovered way of making books, he sought out men to teach him, and having learned, he came to England in 1476 and set up his shop at the red pale in Westminster.

They say a king visited Caxton in his shop. Let us go in too. Of course we smell the ink at once, and hear

every now and then a dull thud ; that comes from the printing-press. Let us go and examine everything in proper order. First we ought to look at these men sitting near the window with a framework of small boxes sloping up in front of them. In the boxes is the type, that is the metal letters ; in one box are all the a's, in another all the b's, and so on. Fixed up to one side



FIG. 108.—Presenting a Printed Book to King Edward IV.

of each worker is the piece of writing which he is putting into print. In his left hand he has a stick with a groove in it. Into the groove he is packing letters to make a line of print. He takes the various letters as he wants them from the little boxes in front of him. When the groove of the stick is full, he takes out the row of type, and puts it in a frame of wood. He keeps on putting other rows of type from the stick into the frame,

until the frame is full. Then he fastens it tightly together, and after ink has been smeared on the letters, it is possible to print two pages of a book with it.

In the front of the picture you can see two other men. One has two pads of leather in his hands, and is using them to smear ink on a frame of type. The other man is laying down a clean sheet of paper which is big enough to cover the frame of type, and become two pages of a book. Next he will fold over the wooden margin which you see on his right, and fasten down the paper with it. Then he will shut down the clean paper on to the inked type, and thrust it under the press, which is on the left of the two men. One of them will pull the lever or handle towards him and squeeze the paper down on to the type. Then the men will draw the framework of type and the paper from under the press, unfold the framework and take out the printed page. In front of the two men are two piles of paper. One is the clean unused paper and the other is made up of printed pages.

Let us examine a page. To us it looks like print, but to a man of Caxton's time it resembled writing, for the types were made to give a mark exactly like the written letters. If the printed words had been different from the written ones, men would not have been able to read them in those days. Next we see that the lines are uneven in length, as in a page of writing. In our books each line is the same length, because printers can make the spaces between the words wider or narrower to suit them, and so make all lines end exactly underneath one another on the right side of the page. But Caxton did not learn this trick till some years after he began to print.



FIG. 109.—Printers at Work in the 16th Century.

Then his lines began to end regularly as you see in the example.

(After dyuerse Werkes made/ translated and achieved/ ha
uynge noo Werke in hande. I sittynge in my studie where as
laye many dyuerse painflettis and bookeys. happened that
to my hande cam a lytyl booke in frensche whiche late was
translated oute of latyn by some noble clerke of fraunce whi
che booke is named Eneydos/ made in latyn by that noble
poete & grete clerke Hyrgyle/ whiche booke I sawe ouer and
redde thezin.

FIG. 110.—A Specimen of Caxton's Printing.

(After diverse works made, translated and achieved, having no work in hand, I sitting in my study, whereas lay many diverse pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named Eneydos, made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk Virgil, which book I saw over and read therein.)

If the printer wants to make eighty copies of a book, he prints eighty pages one after the other, and places them one on top of the other, as you see in the picture, drawing the paper from the unused pile in front of him. When the eighty are complete, he takes the frame from the press, takes out the type, and sets it in order for a new page.

At last, when all the necessary pages are complete, he sends them to the binder to be stitched together. This man sits at work with velvet and leather close to him, to supply covering for the boards of the book; he has thread for stitching, clasps of copper and brass to hold the backs of the book together when it is shut, and nails to fasten on the clasps. Perhaps this book, at which we see him working, will be sold to a lord, or

presented to King Edward IV. For the king is very interested in the new way of making books.

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English history is divided into two periods; one is called mediæval, and the other modern. In this book you have learned something about the mediæval period; in Book V. you will read about the modern one. Many things helped to divide mediæval from modern times. Of those things the invention of printing was one. It made books much cheaper, so that many more people could buy and read them. When men began to study books more, they began to wish for great changes. These changes took place in modern times.

LIST OF DATES

Pre-historic events, known only from archæology	B.C.
[Old Stone Men. No one knows when they came, or when they disappeared.]	
New Stone Men perhaps lived in our island from about	4000 to 2000
The men who used bronze arrived about	2000
The men who used iron began to come about	400
Events recorded in writings	
First landing of Julius Cæsar	55
Second landing of Julius Cæsar	54
Death of Julius Cæsar	44
	A.D.
The beginning of the Roman occupation	43
War of Caractacus against the Romans	43-50
Revolt of Boadicea	60
[The imaginary picture of life in the Roman villa near Greenwich, described in Chapter V., is dated about	340]
The departure of the Roman soldiers	407
The English began to come and build villages	449
Coming of St. Augustine, and the beginning of the Conversion	597
<i>Edwin King of Northumbria</i>	617-633
Edwin became a Christian	627
<i>Oswald King of Northumbria</i>	634-642
The coming of Aidan to Lindisfarne	634
Death of Caedmon the Poet, at Whitby	about 682

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